

OWNING LAND, APPROPRIATING NATURE.  
THE CONFIGURATION OF AN AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN THE  
CAUCA RIVER VALLEY, SOUTHWESTERN COLOMBIA, 1864 - 1901

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## Abstract

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Cauca River Valley in southwestern Colombia became an epicenter of agricultural modernization focused on sugarcane monoculture. Such an environmental transformation relied upon changing market demands, technological improvements, political disposition and a narrative created decades earlier by agents of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal thinking. Politicians, scientists and travelers explained the valley's agricultural history through a social and ecological paradox. They perceived that the exceptional natural richness of the valley's landscape was misused by an inefficient agrarian structure ruled by the colonial manorial *hacienda* and its static pattern of land use based on cattle ranching. Far from being static and futile, the manorial hacienda system experienced fundamental changes in its socio-ecological performance throughout the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century in strategic areas of the Cauca River Valley. The configuration of an agricultural landscape in the Cauca River Valley between 1864 and 1901 was the result of an encounter between several social groups with unequal opportunity to access productive land, diverse needs, and competing interests in using these lands. Traditional *hacendados* were forced to rethink the manorial productive logic and become hands-on farm managers in order to preserve their estates. Meanwhile, new settlers moved into the valley, some, such as foreign entrepreneurs, had the means to access fertile land and invest in agriculture. Others, such as landless peasants and the descendants of freed slaves, had almost nothing, but nonetheless acquired resources to sustain their communities. Focused on the Amaime River, a tributary of the Cauca River, this thesis explores the environmental and social background of land tenure dynamics in Colombian history.

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## **Dedication**

To María Teresa, Juan David, Eva and Daniela

## Table of Contents

Permission to use.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Tables .....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of abbreviations .....	ix
Glossary of foreign words .....	x
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Historiographical discussion .....	7
Theoretical approach.....	16
Methodology and sources .....	19
<b>CHAPTER ONE: Wealthy nature, unworthy people.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.1 Portrayals of the Cauca River Valley’s agricultural landscape .....	25
1.2 Narratives in transition.....	40
<b>CHAPTER TWO: “If you sell land, you eat land” .....</b>	<b>48</b>
2.1. Genesis and logic of the manorial hacienda.....	49
2.1.1 The Cauca River Valley, a niche for manorial haciendas, 16 <sup>th</sup> to 18 <sup>th</sup> centuries.....	53
2.2. “If you sell land, you eat land” .....	60
2.2.1 La Concepción de Amaime: bulwarks of the land tradition.....	61
2.2.2 La Torre: a place of land fragmentation.....	74
<b>CHAPTER THREE: “The master’s eye fattens the cow” .....</b>	<b>83</b>
3.1 Owning land and adaptation to the social context .....	84
3.2 Using the land, from diversification to sketches of monoculture .....	97
3.2.1 Coffee: a consistent trial and error .....	97
3.2.2 Tobacco and indigo: local capacities and demands abroad.....	107
3.2.3 Sugarcane, cattle and the path to monoculture.....	112
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>131</b>

## List of Tables

Table 2.1: Disaggregated prices in pesos oro of the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.....	58
Table 2.2: Livestock quantities in the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.....	59
Table 2.3: Prices in pesos oro of the investments on the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.....	59
Table 2.4: Appraisal of the assets in the hacienda La Concepción from the testament of Barbara Cabal in 1845.....	63
Table 2.5: Appraisal of the assets in the hacienda La Concepción from the testament of José María Molina in 1863.....	65
Table 2.6: Livestock census made by the Chorographic Commission led by the Italian geographer Agustin Codazzi in the Cauca State in 1855.....	66
Table 2.7: Livestock accounts in Enrique Molina's notebook, 1878 – 1886.....	70
Table 2.8: Inventory of El Albion in the hacienda La Concepción, 1894.....	73
Table 3.1: Santiago M. Eder Comparative Statement of 1899 (July) and 1903 (Aug.) (Areas amount in plazas equivalent to 0.64 hectares each, and livestock in heads).....	118

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Geographical location of the Cauca River Valley in today Colombia and the basin of the Amaime River with watershed and selected features.....	4
Figure 1.1: Landscape in the Cauca valley, drawing by De Riou.....	31
Figure 1.2: The <i>enlazada</i> in the Cauca valley, drawing by Neuville.....	33
Figure 1.3: The swamps in Cañitas, drawing by De Riou.....	35
Figure 1.4: <i>Guadua</i> bridge in La Paila River, drawing by De Riou.....	42
Figure 1.5: Flooded forest in the Cauca River, drawing by De Riou.....	44
Figure 2.1: Detail of map of the Cauca River Valley, 18 <sup>th</sup> century.....	54
Figure 2.2. Spatial order in the Cauca River Valley, colonial period and 19 <sup>th</sup> century.....	55
Figure 2.3: Spatial location of the haciendas El Alisal and La Concepción in the basin of the Amaime River, second half of 19 <sup>th</sup> century.....	62
Figure 2.4: Distribution of lands within the hacienda La Concepción, 1890.....	69
Figure 2.5: Drawing in Enrique Molina's notebook, 1880.....	70
Figure 2.6: <i>Trapiche</i> for sugar, drawing by De Riou.....	71
Figure 2.7: Seller of sugarcane, drawing by Neuville.....	72
Figure 2.8: Population totals by townships within the jurisdictions of Buga, Palmira and Cali between 1843 and 1912.....	77
Figure 2.9: Population totals by selected townships within the cantons of Buga, Palmira and Cali between 1843 and 1912.....	77



Figure 2.10: Spatial location of the area of La Torre in the basin of the Amaime River showing land transaction before and after 1891.....	79
Figure 3.1: Spatial location of the haciendas La Manuelita, La Rita and Oriente, 1867.....	87
Figure 3.2: Areas of the haciendas La Manuelita, La Rita and Oriente, 1867.....	89
Figure 3.3: Caserio of workers in the hacienda La Manuelita, 1903.....	94
Figure 3.4: Harvesting coffee in the coffee plantation in La Rita, 1892.....	96
Figure 3.5: Coffee plantation in La Rita, 1890.....	100
Figure 3.6: Loading coffee sacks in La Rita, 1892.....	102
Figure 3.7: Navigation in the Dagua River, drawing by Neuville.....	104
Figure 3.8: Colombia's top exports in five periods between 1864 and 1891 (mean annual values, in thousands of gold pesos).....	106
Figure 3.9: Aggregated Colombia's top exports in five periods between 1864 and 1891 (mean annual values, in thousands of gold pesos).....	106
Figure 3.10: Tobacco production in Palmira for available years.....	109
Figure 3.11: Processing sugar in La Manuelita, 1892.....	115
Figure 3.12: Oxen pulling sugarcane wagons over riel, 1903.....	116
Figure 3.13: Oxen and mules transporting machinery from Buenaventura to Cali for La Manuelita's steam sugar mill, 1899.....	121

### **List of abbreviations**

AHB: Archivo Histórico de Buga (Buga Historical Archive)

AHC: Archivo Histórico de Cali (Cali Historical Archive)

AHLM: Archivo Histórico La Manuelita (La Manuelita Historical Archive, Palmira)

AGN: Archivo General de la Nación (General Archive of Colombia, Bogotá)

UML: University of Miami Libraries

PAML: Private Archive of the Molina Family, Cali

### **Glossary of foreign words**

<b>Acequia</b>	Water canal
<b>Aguardiente</b>	Sugarcane liquor
<b>Cafetal</b>	Coffee field
<b>Campesino</b>	Peasant
<b>Cañaveral</b>	Sugarcane field
<b>Caserío</b>	Hamlet
<b>Criollo</b>	Original of the New World
<b>Encomienda</b>	Grant of indigenous labor and services by the Spanish Crown to Conquistadores
<b>Fanegada</b>	Area measure unit popular in the Cauca Valley equivalent to 0,64 hectares.
<b>Hacendado</b>	Owner of a hacienda
<b>Hacienda</b>	Latin American landed estate system
<b>Mayorazgo</b>	Primogeniture
<b>Mestizo</b>	From mixed ancestry
<b>Plaza</b>	Area measure unit for croplands used in the Cauca Valley of undefined dimensions, often equivalent to 1 fanegada.
<b>Resguardo</b>	Indigenous lands
<b>Tabacal</b>	Tobacco field
<b>Trapiche</b>	Artisanal sugar mill

## Introduction

“On the first day of the first month of the first year of the 20th Century, started sugar machinery of the latest improvement steam power, the first in the country.”<sup>1</sup> With these words on a spare sheet, Santiago Eder commemorated the launch of the first steam-powered sugar mill in Colombia’s Cauca River Valley in 1901. Constructed in Glasgow, Scotland, the new technology crossed two oceans and, dragged by a herd of mules through the jungles and mountains from Colombia’s Pacific port, arrived at Palmira in the Valley. The installation of this steam engine inaugurated the transition toward industrial agriculture in Colombia and led to the consolidation of sugarcane monoculture in the Valley by the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, a consolidated agroindustry cluster rests upon 13 industrial sugar mills and sugarcane crops that cover nearly 85% of the flatland, monopolizing the water and soil resources of this landscape, whose lands were long celebrated for their exceptional fertility.<sup>2</sup> What did the valley’s agricultural landscape look like before monoculture’s ecological homogenization? How did change occur, and what social and ecological factors made it possible?

Forty years before the installation of the steam-powered sugar mill, Eder had embarked on a long journey south from the United States across the Pacific shores, on a quest for business opportunities that drove him eventually to the slopes of the Cauca River Valley. Prompted by the productive potential of this landscape, he bought the landed estate of La Manuelita in the basin of the Amaime River, where he undertook various agricultural activities in response to international market demands. Considering himself a pioneer, Eder represented the arrival of 19th century liberal thinking in the Cauca River Valley’s

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<sup>1</sup> Phanor James Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder* (Bogotá: Flota Mercante Grancolombiana, 1981), 527.

<sup>2</sup> From 9,950 hectares in 1930, the area of sugarcane crops in the Valley grew to 182,000 in 1995 and 225,560 in 2010. Olga Lucía Delgadillo Vargas, “La caña de azúcar en la historia ambiental del valle geográfico del río Cauca (1864-2010)” (Universidad Javeriana de Colombia, 2014).

agricultural landscape. Like him, numerous foreign travelers and Colombian liberal politicians believed that the Valley was blessed with a remarkable natural wealth but remained misused by the social constraints of an ancient agrarian structure. This system was represented by the manorial *hacienda* (landed estate), characterized by static land use and land tenure patterns confined to local markets, for which land was a privileged source of social prestige. Over time, agricultural modernizers resumed this narrative in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and used it to legitimize the intervention in the Cauca Valley's agriculture that eventually led to sugarcane monoculture.<sup>3</sup>

Far from being static and futile, the manorial hacienda system experienced fundamental changes in its socio-ecological performance throughout the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century in strategic areas of the Cauca River Valley, such as in the basin of the Amaime River. During the period of liberal regime from 1863 to 1886, political, economic and social forces triggered the fragmentation of landed estates and prompted the appearance of new social groups with diverse ways to appropriate and transform nature. While traditional *hacendados* (hacienda owners) were forced to rethink the manorial productive logic to preserve their estates, new settlers moved into the Valley, some with the means to access fertile land and invest in agriculture –such as Santiago Eder–, others without means but who nonetheless needed resources to sustain communities, such as landless peasants and the descendants of freed slaves. The land tenure dynamics that distinguished these social groups set up land use patterns that were conditioned by their diverse cultural contexts, material conditions and social opportunities, but relied on the same environmental settings. This research addresses the environmental dimension of land ownership changes that framed the transformation of

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<sup>3</sup> Politicians, entrepreneurs and technocrats joined their interests to pursue the improvement of agricultural yields in the Valley since early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their aim relied upon a particular environmental perspective, in which the natural wealth of the valley was understood as ground for “progress” and for the formation of a regional feeling. The creation in 1910 of the Cauca Valley estate reinforced this regional enthusiasm. Nancy Motta González and Aceneth Perafán Cabrera, *Historia Ambiental Del Valle Del Cauca, Geoespacialidad, Cultura y Género* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2012).

manorial haciendas in the basin of the Amaime River between 1864 and 1901. Such mutation of the manorial agrarian structure determined the configuration of the Cauca River Valley's agricultural landscape by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Cauca River is located in southwestern Colombia and forms the second most important inter-Andean basin of the northern Andes Mountains after the Magdalena River (Figure 1). Where the elevation reaches 900 meters, between the central and western Andes mountain ranges, its middle basin widens into approximately 448,000 hectares of a flatland known as the Cauca River Valley.<sup>4</sup> With a combination of aluvial and volcanic soils these plains were originally covered by ecosystems of dry tropical forest and wide wetlands: two ecosystems that were drastically transformed in the course of the story told here. At the northern side of the widest part of the Valley flows the Amaime River for more than 30 km in flat terrain, where it receives the waters of the Nima River. The Amaime's hydrological basin reaches about 50,000 hectares shared between the jurisdictions of Palmira and El Cerrito.

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<sup>4</sup> In 1910, the Cauca Valley became an independent state from the Cauca State that previously comprised all southern Colombian territory. To avoid inaccuracies, here names of the geographical unity are distinguished from the political jurisdictions that actually changed during the period of this study. What is called here the *Cauca River Valley* refers to the flatlands on this part of the Cauca River's middle basin, which technically today comprises the states (from south to north) of Cauca, Cauca Valley and Risaralda (olive green in Figure 1).

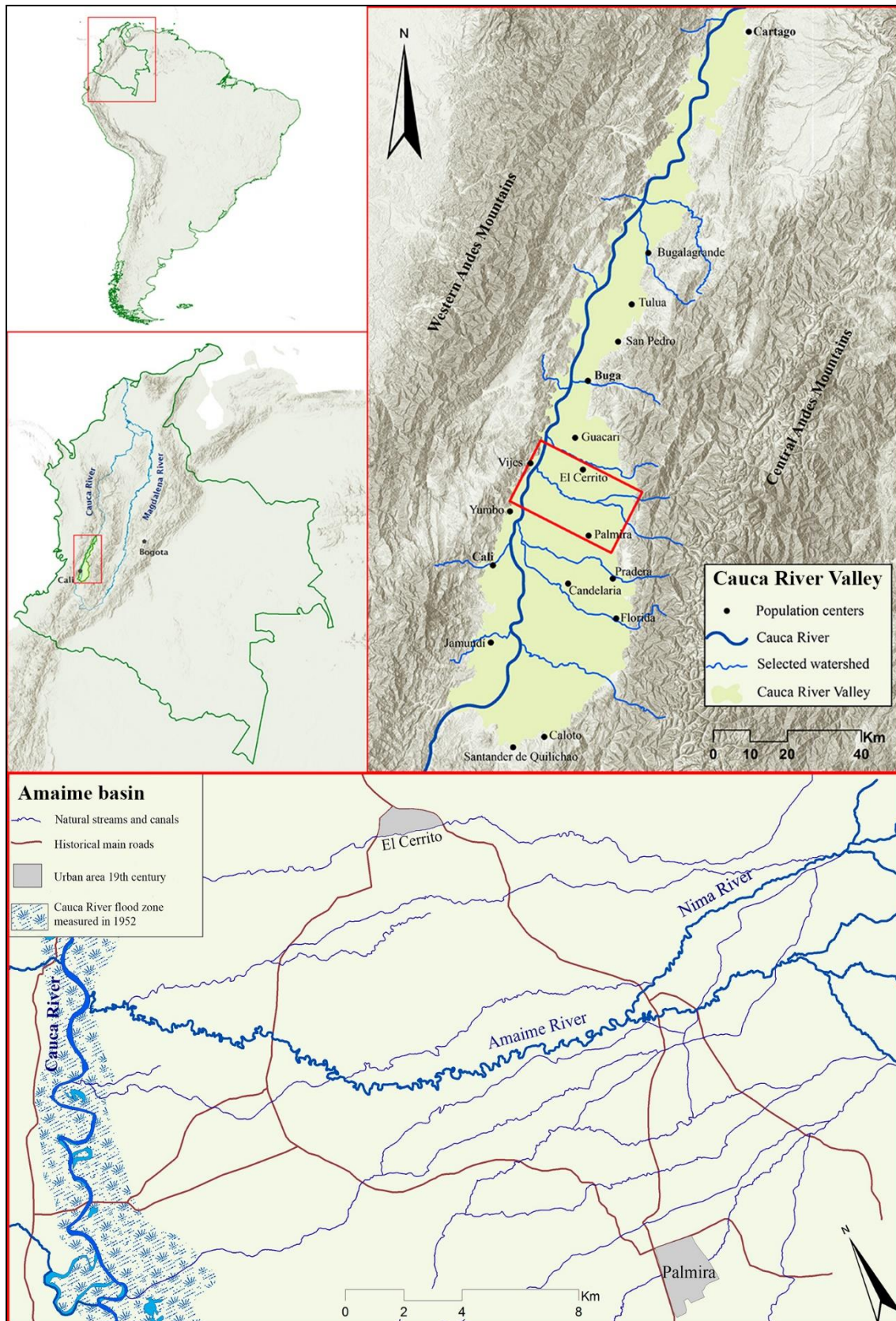


Figure 1: Geographical location of the Cauca River Valley in present Colombia and the basin of the Amaime River with watershed and selected features.

The rise to power of the Liberal Party, from the late 1840s and reaffirmed in the constitution of Rionegro in 1863, inaugurated a period of structural reforms in Colombia's government that sought to transform the productivity of the country toward an export-orientated economy. Among these reforms, the land policies of the liberal project aimed to transform colonial agrarian structures and stimulate the efficiency of productive lands, without necessarily threatening the monopolies of landed estates. In doing so, the government promoted at various times the dismantling of ecclesiastic estates, the extinction of *mayorazgo* (primogeniture), the elimination of Indigenous communal land rights (*resguardos*), and the distribution of *bladíos* (public lands).<sup>5</sup> Such measures, widespread among 19th century Latin American republican governments, looked forward to dismantling the manorial agrarian structure by letting loose the free sale of lands, in order to encourage investments to nourish the national economy.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of freedom instituted by the liberal government was based on the free movement of land and labor, for which they had to eliminate all the restrictions imposed by the old regime. Since the abolition of slavery in 1851, numerous families of African descendants and *mestizos* (mixed ancestry) were set free into a distinctly unequal society and without legal access to lands, particularly in regions where slavery thrived in relation to the

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<sup>5</sup> David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 107. In the Cauca River valley Indigenous *resguardos* (common lands) were not considerable, at least in Palmira and Cerrito, and the most important Jesuit estates had already been seized a century earlier. The elimination of *mayorazgo* actually impacted the land ownership structure on this landscape. Grounded in the manorial land tenure system, the *mayorazgo* required inherited land to pass to the firstborn son of the family, preventing the fragmentation of properties.

<sup>6</sup> In theory, the aim of liberalism was to guarantee access to land to all "citizens" (white and male). In practice, local elites often found ways to retain and increase their landed possessions at the expense of the increasing number of peasant settlers across the country. These dynamics varied from region to region, and became the cause for many of the social conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially on the Caribbean Coast and the eastern Andean hillside. The expansion of the agrarian border over marsh, forests and mountain slopes happened after landless settlers voluntarily cleared and adapted the terrain. *Hacendados* would then appear to claim the cleared lands using old and ambiguous land deeds. As a result, settlers became tenants of the haciendas, whose lands increased significantly for the expansion of their livestock. Orlando Fals-Borda, *Capitalismo, Hacienda y Poblamiento: Su Desarrollo En La Costa Atlántica* (Bogotá: Punta de Lanza, 1976).



mining economy, such as in the Cauca River Valley.<sup>7</sup> The restrictions of the old regime were the foundations of the manorial hacienda model in the Cauca River Valley. The *mayorazgo* protected the integrity of great estates and slavery retained forced labor within them. The elimination of both signified the twilight of an agrarian regime, especially when the traditional landed elites, plunged into financial crisis, sold land as the only economic resource to support their urban lifestyle. This circumstance activated a busy land market in the Cauca River flatlands between the 1860s and 1900s, attracting local people and settlers from other regions to obtain their small plot of fertile land. Some hacendados were forced to become farmers and ranchers in the countryside to preserve their heritage.

In line with the *laissez faire* doctrine, liberals hastened to eliminate state monopolies, reduce export taxes, and negotiate customs duties, among other measures, fostering a novel economic culture among Colombia's upper class.<sup>8</sup> The elimination of state monopoly over the tobacco market after 1845 inaugurated export of agricultural commodities. After tobacco, commodities such as cinchona bark and coffee led Colombia's economy in its engagement with the international market.<sup>9</sup> The context of investor optimism drew the attention of foreign merchants and entrepreneurs with their eyes on Latin America's opening economy. One of them was Santiago Eder. With accessible land and labor, Eder obtained his own hacienda where he launched numerous agricultural ventures, following the fluctuation of commodity prices in New York and London, without neglecting his position as prestigious landlord in the valley. Eder's estate, "La Manuelita", became a liberal hacienda, rooted in a manorial social context but devoted economically to the wider commercial circuit of the international market. The institutional context of the liberal period unchained the erosion of the manorial order in

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<sup>7</sup> Mateo Mina, *Esclavitud y Libertad En El Valle Del Rio Cauca* (Bogotá: Publicaciones de la Rosca, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Although reduced in the continental context, the exports growth per capita in Colombia was notably steady throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century: from a critical level of \$1.88 (U.S. dollars) in the mid-1830s to \$3.28 in 1855 and \$4.77 in 1880. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia. Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

the Cauca River Valley. With the systematic appearance of new actors from diverse backgrounds, land tenure dynamics began to change, and with them the perceived best use of the Valley's rich soils.

### **Historiographical discussion**

Agricultural processes in Latin America have been a field of historiographical interest for several decades. In the context of twentieth-century social struggles, the Marxist concept of transition in modes of production was the common scheme for historians committed to explaining the historical configuration of Latin American societies in the context of persistent social, political, and economic problems. Historical materialist analysis identified colonial continuities as the main obstacles to a transition toward capitalism.<sup>10</sup> In the nineteenth century, these *neocolonial* legacies remained powerful forces within the emergent independent republics in two interrelated ways. One was external, in the reliance of national economies on an export model that kept them dependent on world market demand. The other one was internal, in the relations of production that prevailed in the rural world, dividing a landless and unwaged peasantry from a landowner bourgeoisie with a monopoly on the means of production. The paradox was that despite the abundance of productive land and accumulation of a large labor force, the *criollo bourgeoisie* did not improve the efficiency of the agricultural world and failed to create a capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, they reinforced feudal production relations, and limited land use mostly to extensive livestock farming with only limited crop plantations in a few areas. Explaining this

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<sup>10</sup> In 1967, Tulio Halperín-Donghi published his *Contemporary History of Latin America*, a work that established the narrative for the New History in the region. Under the influence of Annales school and historical materialism, Halperín-Donghi examined the long-term process of socioeconomic structures in the post-independence period in Latin American countries, telling a story with more continuities than changes. In his words: "the middle years of the nineteenth century saw the gradual arrangement of a new colonial compact, one orienting Latin America toward the industrializing centers of the European economy in a manner that some local elites had desired since the time of independence". His work established the concept of *neocolonialism* as a way to explain Latin American contemporary history through its *longue durée*. Tulio Halperín-Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Duke University Press, 1993), xiv.

contradiction, economic and social approaches have dominated Latin American agrarian historiography since the 1950s.

For the case of Colombia, social historians influenced by the agrarian reforms started to question the origins of the peasantry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, regarding the inequalities and struggles that framed their consolidation as a social force in the countryside. The colonization of agrarian frontiers by mestizo peasants or those “free of all colors” became the departure point to understand this process. Since the 1950s, the works of Orlando Fals-Borda in Boyacá and the Caribbean coast, and James J. Parsons for Antioquia, argued that the colonization of public lands and agrarian frontier by free settlers was exploited by the hacienda landlords, taking advantage of legal gaps and State centralism. As a result, the haciendas grabbed the new productive lands by manipulating land deeds and controlling the peasants’ labor through false debts.<sup>11</sup> Later on, the studies of Catherine LeGrand, Dario Fajardo, and Marco Palacios among others, complemented social history, this time for different regions and in relation to the upsurge of armed conflict between peasant guerillas and the Colombian state.<sup>12</sup> In the 1980s, the cliometrics school, including authors such as Jesús Antonio Bejarano, Salomón Kalmanovitz and Dario Mesa explored the agricultural history of Colombia employing proper Marxist language.<sup>13</sup> This historical process is approached and complemented here by distinguishing the various actors involved through their ways to relate with land and nature while developing agricultural projects. This

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<sup>11</sup> James J. Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Orlando Fals-Borda, *El Hombre y La Tierra En Boyacá: Bases Sociológicas e Históricas Para Una Reforma Agraria* (Bogotá: Antares, 1957); Fals-Borda, *Capitalismo, Hacienda y Poblamiento*.

<sup>12</sup> Darío Fajardo, *El Estado Y La Formación Del Campesinado En El Siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Historia y Sociedad, 1981); Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850 - 1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970: An Economic, Social and Political History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Mario Arrubla, ed., *La Agricultura Colombiana En El Siglo XX*, Biblioteca Básica Colombiana (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1976).

thesis seeks to address the environmental dimension of land ownership processes in Colombian agrarian history.

More recently, environmental historians joined the discussion, bringing to light the ecological dimension of economic behaviors, and revealing how closely linked social and environmental burdens have been. Since the 1970s, environmental history emerged as a field that moves through interdisciplinary gaps to analyze the relationships between societies and nature over time. According to William Cronon, environmental history starts with the understanding “that human acts occur within a network of relationships, processes, and systems that are as ecological as they are cultural”. Therefore, “the importance of the natural world, its objective effects on people, and the concrete ways people affect it in turn are not at issue; they are the very heart of our intellectual project.” The inclusion of natural elements as actors in human history requires a narrative form that flows in two interrelated ways: the conditions of environment in the sustenance and cultural definition of societies, and the effects of human action on natural systems.<sup>14</sup>

Latin American environmental historiography has demonstrated that ecological features are key factors for understanding the outcome of the liberal economic model. Numerous studies analyze the environmental histories of agricultural landscapes from the Caribbean islands to Argentina’s Pampa flatlands. Christian Brannstrom and Stefania Gallini have proposed a conceptual axis of “territories, commodities, and knowledge” to distinguish the historiographical approaches from environmental history to the *export boom* between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their effort to highlight environmental factors that have

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<sup>14</sup> William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992), 1349.

been overlooked in the historiography of the commodities boom provides an analytical structure for this research.<sup>15</sup>

Some historians have focused on the impact of commodities production in human and natural landscapes. Their work examines the role of specific agricultural products in the history of each country, analyzing the ecological relationship behind the search for and development of commodities, and consequent effects on ecosystems. Reinaldo Funes traces the long-term history of sugar cane agriculture in Cuba and its impact on local landscapes. With an exhaustive and thoughtful effort, Funes reveals the transition from rainforest to sugar cane monoculture through the particular circumstances of Cuban history, from a long-lasting Spanish colonialism to the US intervention and the 1959 revolution.<sup>16</sup> For Costa Rica, Andrea Montero and Roney Viales explore the expansion of banana production in the context of the United Fruit Company's first entry into the Caribbean. They apply the concept of "agriculturalization" meaning a historical process of change in agricultural landscapes that paralleled industrialization.<sup>17</sup> John Soluri offers an alternative view of the United Fruit Company's banana market and its impact on Honduran societies and environments, linking the two extremes of the productive chain through commodification. The creation of commodities, or "commodification", defined by Arjun Appadurai, is a process driven by an economic aim to transform a plant into a good for trade that relies on ecological conditions. Soluri demonstrates how banana commodification faced a paradox when diseases compelled

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<sup>15</sup> Christian Brannstrom and Stefania Gallini, "An Introduction to Latin America Environmental History," in *Territories, Commodities and Knowledges: Latin American Environmental History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2004), 1, 20.

<sup>16</sup> Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Andrea Montero Mora and Ronny Viales Hurtado, "'Agriculturización' y cambios en el paisaje. El banano en el Atlántico/Caribe de Costa Rica (1870-1930)," *Historia Ambiental Latinoamericana y Caribeña* 3, no. 2 (March 30, 2014): 310, 338.

the company to change species and thus redefine the cultural image of the product for consumption.<sup>18</sup>

Other studies emphasize the environmental meaning of territorial expansion for the creation of agricultural landscapes. The internal territorial expansion of Latin American nations in the nineteenth century relied upon a political change in the notion of territory associated with liberal economic ideology. This new worldview endorsed a conversion of common lands and wastelands to productive private property. That practice triggered struggles by peasant and Indigenous communities with encroaching nation-states, mainly over access to natural resources. Stefania Gallini studies the process of the agro-export model in Guatemala during the nineteenth century. She makes political, social, economic, and environmental arguments to analyze the territorial transformation of the Costa Cuca and the marginalization of Indigenous communities for the profit of coffee plantations.<sup>19</sup> Karl Offen explores the geographical discourses used by Nicaraguan elites during the incorporation of the Mosquita coast in search of potential products for the international market, such as wood and rubber. Offen's study reveals how complex was the interaction between state expansion, geographical imagination, and environmental outcomes in the case of Nicaragua.<sup>20</sup>

In Colombia, the geographer Andres Guhl has written about the nation's characteristic agricultural product: coffee. His research analyses the creation of a monoculture landscape in the western Andes Mountains in parallel with Colombian economic growth based on coffee exports in the second half of the twentieth century. From a geographical perspective, Guhl

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<sup>18</sup> John Soluri, *Banana Cultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); John Soluri, "Bananas, Biodiversity and the Paradox of Commodification," in *Territories, Commodities and Knowledges*, 195, 217.

<sup>19</sup> Stefania Gallini, *Una Historia Ambiental Del Café En Guatemala: La Costa Cuca Entre 1830 y 1902*, Autores Invitados (Ciudad de Guatemala: AVANCSO, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Karl H. Offen, "The Geographical Imagination, Resource Economies and Nicaraguan Incorporation of the Mosquita, 1838-1909," in *Territories, Commodities and Knowledges*, 1, 20.

demonstrates that intensification and technological innovation of coffee crops relied on the rugged geography of Colombia's coffee zone, and affected the farmer's relationship with the environment through the shift from diversity to monoculture.<sup>21</sup> Christian Brannstrom's research on the dynamics of Brazil's agricultural frontier in the first half of the twentieth century is another example to approach territorial expansion in the context of liberal ideology. Brannstrom's work reveals the factors necessary to create, control, and maintain land tenure regimes in agricultural frontiers, and evaluates the ecological outcomes of the land-use patterns determined by such land access conditions.<sup>22</sup> The case of Argentina is developed by Gustavo Zarrilli, whose research focuses on the agricultural expansion into the Pampa territory under the pressure of twentieth century capitalism. Zarrilli explores ecological consequences resulting from the society-nature relationship established by short-term rents in agrarian capitalist structure, such as soil erosion and natural disasters.<sup>23</sup>

In the heart of this process, the manorial hacienda and its extensive cattle ranching enterprise has been the topic of geographer Shawn Van Ausdal for the Colombian case. Of particular interest here, Shawn Van Ausdal analyzes the historical geography of cattle ranching throughout the development of livestock haciendas in the Colombian Caribbean Savannas, and the environmental impact of pasture expansion over forests from 1850 to 1950.<sup>24</sup> Van Ausdal challenges the historiographical presumption of an exclusive prestige tenure logic behind the expansion of haciendas, in order to scrutinize the internal logic of

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<sup>21</sup> Andrés Guhl, *Café Y Cambio de Paisaje En Colombia, 1970-2005* (Medellín: EAFIT, Banco de la República, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Christian Brannstrom, "Talking to Sediments: Reading Environmental History from Post-Settlement Alluvium in Western Sao Paulo, Brazil," in *Territories, Commodities and Knowledges*, 171, 191; "Livestock, Sugar and Coffee in Latin America's 'Long' Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, no. 2 (April 1, 2001): 264–70.

<sup>23</sup> Adrián Gustavo Zarrilli, "Capitalism, Ecology, and Agrarian Expansion in the Pampean Region, 1890–1950," *Environmental History* 6, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 561–83.

<sup>24</sup> Shawn Van Ausdal, "The Logic of Livestock: An historical geography of cattle ranching in Colombia, 1850–1950" (Ph.D., University of California, 2009).

livestock production and better explain the domain of this activity in Colombian rural spaces until the present.<sup>25</sup>

This research follows Van Ausdal's proposal of investigating the logic, constitution and transformation of haciendas to understand the drivers behind Latin American social and ecological inequalities over time and space. Key contribution in this matter, this thesis suggests the concept of the liberal hacienda as a meeting point between the traditional agrarian structure and the modern liberal economy. Additionally, it analyses the dissimilar transformation of manorial haciendas under the pressure of a particularly busy land market, revealing the varied outcomes within the transformation of the manorial agrarian structure. A deeper understanding of the hacienda's productive logic in particular cases and landscapes is needed to complement the knowledge on the continuities and changes of colonial agrarian structures, and their role in current socio-ecological conflicts in Latin America.

On the Cauca Valley, several works have approached the historical processes that shaped a particular society on the flatlands of the valley from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Father of Cauca Valley's historiography, German Colmenares introduced the historical methods of the Annales School to understand the social and economic processes in this region. Colmenares set the ground for further research in the field by scrutinizing the Valley's society during the colonial period including landlords, merchants and miners.<sup>26</sup> With an aim to conceptualize the formation of a regional identity, many historians have found a cornerstone of the Valley's history to be a compact between hacendados and

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<sup>25</sup> Shawn Van Ausdal, "Pasture, Profit, and Power: An Environmental History of Cattle Ranching in Colombia, 1850–1950," *Geoforum* 40, no. 5 (2009): 707–719; Shawn Van Ausdal, "Ni calamidad ni panacea: Una reflexión en torno a la historiografía de la ganadería colombiana" in *El poder de la carne*, ed. Alberto Flórez Malagón (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2012), 28–46.

<sup>26</sup> Germán Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes. Siglo XVIII* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1975); German Colmenares et al., eds., *Sociedad y Economía En El Valle Del Cauca*, Biblioteca Banco Popular (Bogotá: Fondo de Promoción de la Cultura del Banco Popular Departamento de Publicaciones de la Universidad del Valle, 1983).



entrepreneurs from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that shaped the creation of the Cauca Valley state in 1910. Colmenares, José Escorcía and Zamira Díaz complemented the social and economic analysis of Cauca Valley history for the period of transition from colony to republic, and the impact of independence wars on the agrarian world of the Valley.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Alonso Valencia studied the pacts and conflicts between entrepreneurs and politicians in the context of Caucan power. His work set the ground for the field of *historia empresarial* (business history) in the Cauca Valley.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to this topic, other researchers have focused on labor relations and the role of peasants and workers in the formation of local history, as actors from diverse backgrounds that established their livelihoods on the margins of productive lands monopolized by haciendas. Mateo Mina introduced the study of slavery and its consequences after abolition in the permanence of social inequality in the agrarian world of the Valley.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Richard Preston carried out a thorough research on the role of credit as pillar of the labor relations and material sustenance of haciendas and agricultural enterprises by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> Finally, Eduardo Mejía Parado developed a general view of the different kind of *campesinados* (peasantry) that were shaped in the Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Mejía managed to differentiate the differences between peasants in the valley according to their cultural origins, access to land and agricultural practices.<sup>31</sup> The MA dissertation of Eduardo Mejía and Armando Moncayo contributed to the discussion by studying the concrete case of

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<sup>27</sup> José Escorcía, “Haciendas y estructura agraria en el Valle del Cauca 1810-1850,” *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 0, no. 10 (January 1, 1982): 119–38; Zamira Díaz de Zuluaga, *Guerra y economía en las haciendas: Popayán, 1780-1830* (Fondo de Promoción de la Cultura del Banco Popular, Departamento de Publicaciones de la Universidad del Valle, 1983).

<sup>28</sup> Alonso Valencia Llano, *Empresarios y Políticos En El Estado Soberano Del Cauca. 1860 - 1895* (Santiago de Cali: Editorial Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad del Valle, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Mateo Mina, *Esclavitud y Libertad En El Valle Del Rio Cauca* (Bogotá: Publicaciones de la Rosca, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> Richard Preston Hyland, “A Fragile Prosperity: Credit and Agrarian Structure in the Cauca Valley, Colombia, 1851-87”

<sup>31</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano* (Cali: Universidad del Cauca, 1993).

Santiago Eder and La Manuelita in the transition from hacienda to industrial sugar mill. Their work was the first to analyze the private documents of La Manuelita, also consulted here and complemented with the private documents of Eder's son. Unlike them, this thesis addresses the environmental concerns and consequences of Eder's enterprise, while locating the historical actor within the specific area of the Amaime River.<sup>32</sup>

Although incipient for the region, studies on the environmental history of the Cauca Valley have showed important contributions toward understanding the drastic ecological impact of human actions in the Valley's landscape, especially related to the expansion of sugarcane monoculture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early approaches from historical geography identified the relationship between humans and nature as key factors to explain the spatial configuration of the region. Since the 1970s the Chilean geographer Luis Valdivia achieved exceptional studies of human geography in the Cauca Valley, including an exercise of georeferencing and analyzing historical cartography, and reconstructing the areas and land uses of haciendas. His important contributions led to the foundation of the journal *Historia y Espacio*.<sup>33</sup> More recently, the work of Oscar Almario brings together the historiographical tradition, and positions a compelling spatial analysis on the history of the Cauca Valley.<sup>34</sup> The environmental history studies of Perafan and Olga Lucia Delgadillo established solid grounds through different methodologies for this perspective to expand in the region, a task that this thesis seeks to echo. Leading the field of environmental history in the Cauca Valley, Aceneth Perafán has established a solid basis for any historical and environmental approach

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<sup>32</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado and Armando Moncayo Urrutia, "La Transición de Hacienda a Ingenio Azucarero Industrializado En El Valle Geográfico Del Río Cauca, 1850-1925" (Tesis de Licenciatura, Departamento de Historia, Universidad del Valle, 1986).

<sup>33</sup> Luis Valdivia Rojas, "Descripción del mapa del Valle del río Cauca y sus afluentes," *Historia Y Espacio* 0, no. 2 (1979): 117–127; Luis Valdivia Rojas, *Economía y Espacio: El Valle Del Cauca 1850 a 1950* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Óscar Almario García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940: Espacio, Poblamiento, Poder y Cultura* (Popayan: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, 2013).

to this region. Further analysis and methodologies are needed from this foundation to reach deeper analysis of the complex environmental relations in the Valley's history.<sup>35</sup>

### **Theoretical approach**

Land ownership has been a key aspect in the study of Latin American agricultural history. To social historians, the expansion of the hacienda's properties over wastelands and common lands drove the exploitation of peasants and Indigenous people, encouraging ongoing struggles against landlords. In Marxist historical materialist terms, the accumulation of land by the *criollo bourgeoisie* laid the groundwork for the later monopoly of the other means of production, labor and capital, in their pursuit of increasing profit. The environmental approaches considered territorial expansion based on a legalized appropriation of productive lands as a major force in the changing relationship between humans and nature, and in the subsequent transformation of landscapes. This thesis emphasizes such issues, looking for the association between land tenure regimes and land use patterns as a means of human sustenance and appropriation of natural resources from a metabolic perspective.

By explaining social change as an endogenous force that moves societies through subsequent stages of modes of production, Marxist conceptions of transition present a linear, progressive and inevitable evolution, in which each phase must be superior to the previous one and directed by the contradictions of economic growth. However, considering modes of production as the result of human actions toward nature that rely on ecological conditions

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<sup>35</sup> Nancy Motta González and Aceneth Perafán Cabrera. *Historia Ambiental Del Valle Del Cauca, Geoespacialidad, Cultura y Género* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2012); Aceneth Perafán Cabrera, *Valle Del Cauca: Un Estudio En Torno a Su Sociedad y Medio Ambiente* (Cali: Programa Editorial Universidad del Valle, 2012); Olga Lucía Delgadillo Vargas. "La caña de azúcar en la historia ambiental del valle geográfico del río Cauca (1864-2010)." (Universidad Javeriana de Colombia, 2014); Joan Marull, Olga Lucía Delgadillo, Claudio Cattaneo, María José La Rota and Fridolin Krausman. "Socioecological Transition in the Cauca River Valley, Colombia (1943–2010): Towards an Energy–Landscape Integrated Analysis," *Regional Environmental Change* 18, no. 4 (April 1, 2018): 1073–87.

and depend on technological improvements, the developmental trajectory becomes more complex. Taking into account environmental concerns, the developmental and cornucopian narrative did not consider the natural limits of economic growth, and even encouraged ecological damage.<sup>36</sup>

In the middle ground, between historical materialism and ecology, the concept of social metabolism emerged in the 1990s. It combines social and environmental sciences to explain the relations between society and nature from its material bases, analyze their behavior over time, and assess the outcome of this process in terms of sustainability. Defined by Manuel González de Molina and Victor Manuel Toledo, social metabolism implies the set of processes through which humans in society *appropriate, circulate, transform, consume* and *excrete* energy and materials from the natural world.<sup>37</sup> This thesis adopts from social metabolism the concept of “socio-ecological transition”, and especially the initial action of that process: the human appropriation of nature. Socio-ecological interactions change over time depending on human needs and capabilities, which is why this perspective focuses on a concept of transition that Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helmut Haberl called the socio-ecological transition. In their words, it is the “transition from the agrarian regime, energetically based upon solar energy and land-use, to the industrial regime, based upon fossil fuels and a wide variety of conversion technologies.”<sup>38</sup> Although the proper energetic

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<sup>36</sup> Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helmut Haberl, *Socio-ecological Transitions and Global Change: Trajectories of Social Metabolism and Land Use*, Advances in Ecological Economics (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2007). Ecological thinking started to question the static theoretical concepts of “equilibrium” and “climax” to explain change over time in ecosystems in a functionalist way. By recognizing that social systems exist within ecosystems, ecology found it necessary to understand and explain local environmental changes in relationship to the shifts of human activities and thoughts over time. In the words of William Cronon, “with the imperatives of the climax concept no longer so strong, ecology was prepared to become at least in part a historical science, for which change was less the result of ‘disturbance’ than of the ordinary process whereby communities maintained and transformed themselves.” William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 11.

<sup>37</sup> Manuel González de Molina, *The Social Metabolism A Socio-Ecological Theory of Historical Change*, vol. 3, Environmental History (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014)

<sup>38</sup> Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helmut Haberl, *Socioecological Transitions and Global Change. Trajectories of Social Metabolism and Land Use* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2007), 5. The idea

transition occurred in the Cauca River Valley until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this research addresses the process in which varied social groups occupied and surveyed a specific sector of the Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, setting the conditions for further drastic land use changes.

Before using the land, and appropriating energy and materials from nature to obtain the essential means of sustenance, modern western society established another step: to own and bound the land. Land tenure dynamics reveal the stratification within societies and the inequalities in the access to essential means of sustenance. In Cronon's words, "To define property is thus to represent boundaries between people; equally, it is to articulate at least one set of conscious ecological boundaries between people and things."<sup>39</sup> Through land ownership societies establish a relationship with that particular fragment of nature by assigning a value to it, a value that depends as much as on the physical state of the land as on the market demands and livelihood needs of peoples. This social distribution of land entails an initial appropriation of the natural elements within a given space and sets the preconditions for their further use and transformation. Land use changes begin with land tenure structures that are product of the economic and social stratification, defining whether there is an equal or unequal access to nature's goods, commodities and services.<sup>40</sup>

Land use is the first indicator for socioecological analysis, from which it is possible to state the human appropriation of natural resources in agricultural contexts by measuring the spatial distribution of productive activities. Changes over time in land use dynamics indicate the scale of a transition and establish the basis for a deeply socioecological analysis,

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of transition employed here does not follow a progressive direction, unlike the concepts of transition from social science since the nineteenth century, such as Hegel's dialectic teleology, historical materialism, Adam Smith's classical economic theory, and even Darwin's theory of evolution. Socio-ecological historical perspectives provide the means to understand the unsustainable background that economic thinking established since the Industrial Revolution, and the global dependence on non-renewable energy sources.

<sup>39</sup> Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 58.

<sup>40</sup> González de Molina and Toledo, *The Social Metabolism*, 53.

including the estimation of nutrient and energy balances. The logic within a land use pattern and its relationship with a land ownership system can be traced in the definition of *appropriation units*, which constitute the first unit of metabolic analysis in rural contexts. According to Gonzalez de Molina and Toledo, “all appropriation units (P) are real and metaphorically located at the intersection between the Natural and the Social, occupying the outer portion of a given social totality.”<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, appropriation units change over space and time, making necessary their definition by the contingency of each case. Although this thesis does not considers metabolic measurements for the agricultural systems analyzed, it analyzes and explains the historical transformation and productive structure of the core rural appropriation unit in Latin American modern history: the hacienda.

### **Methodology and sources**

This research combines qualitative and quantitative methods from a wide variety of primary sources. To dissect the narrative of natural wealth and social misuse, it analyses several chronicles of North American and European travelers who visited the Cauca River Valley in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their tales are assessed as spatial narratives that observed the holistic relationship between humans and nature in the Valley through different vocabularies and angles, and yet ultimately presented the same plot. Singular case studies of several haciendas in the basin of the Amaime River rely upon personal papers that reveal individual ambitions, projects and connections in the performance of agricultural activities. The private documents of the Molina family in Cali reveals the case of the hacienda La Concepción. The private archive of Phanor Eder, Santiago Eder’s son, consulted in the Special Collections of the University of Miami, Florida, U.S. Other documents for Eder’s

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<sup>41</sup> González de Molina and Toledo, *The Social Metabolism*, 89.

case were consulted in the private archive of the Ingenio Manuelita S.A. in Palmira, Colombia. Additionally, historical maps, illustrations and photographs are considered.

The reconstruction of the material configuration of selected haciendas was possible through inventories and appraisals included in land deeds, testaments and internal accounts. These data are presented in tables throughout the texts and their content analyzed in percentage of items per total prices, quantities and areas when available. Some of the legal documents were stored in the private archives, while others were found in notarial archives in Cali and Buga. In the notarial archives are also utilized numerous land transactions (purchases, leases and donations) on the area of study from the 1860s to the 1890s. These sources were systematized in a database that distinguishes social traits of sellers and buyers, prices, land use and natural features of the properties when available, plus areas and spatial location of properties. This database made it possible to georeference the spatial location and change over time of land tenure in the basin of the Amaime River. These results are presented in maps that allow the reader to move across this landscape while learning about its environmental history.

The cartographical exercise employs Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS) methods focused on land tenure and land use. Although incipient, the geo-localization of land cover based on archival information makes it possible to assess the proportion and change of agricultural land uses, farming, ranching and husbandry, in relation to native ecosystems, forests and wetlands. The application of HGIS methods provides a fresh way to study historical evidence in a spatial dimension, analyze change over time in the human appropriation and transformation of ecosystems, and measure the ecological outcomes of such processes. HGIS provides a way to integrate land use and land tenure spatial data, analyze their attributes and interaction, and display the configuration and change

of the agricultural landscape over time.<sup>42</sup> The absence of detailed data about land uses in the notarial documentation consulted here, such as farmed areas and specific geo-localization, hindered an integrated implementation of HGIS scopes in this research. However, land transactions, contracts and testaments provided important evidence of estates areas and borders, which allowed the creation of land tenure maps of varied sectors in the basin of the Amaime River. These area polygons combined with complementary documents from the owner's private archives, made possible a qualitative analysis for each actor involved in the configuration of this agricultural landscape.

This thesis is structured in three chapters. The first one follows various European and North American travellers through their adventures in the Cauca River Valley in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. While drawing an initial sketch of this historical landscape for the reader, the chapter analyzes the production of a narrative of “wealth and misuse” applied by many people engaged with 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism who critiqued the agricultural landscape of the Valley. The chapter shows how such narratives reflected and influenced the choices of the actors who shaped this agricultural landscape over time, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural entrepreneurs to the agricultural modernizers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second chapter focuses on the rise and mutation of the manorial hacienda system in the Cauca River Valley. First, defines the concept of the manorial hacienda through a discussion of Latin American historiography. It then analyses two cases in the basin of the Amaime River that reveal alternative outcomes for the hacienda system in the context of the Valley's busy land market during the liberal era. Hacienda La Concepción, owned by the Molina, family shows a scenario in which a traditional family had to transform their manorial way of life as absentee landlords to become engaged farmers and ranchers in order to

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<sup>42</sup> Anne Kelly Knowles, ed., *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History* (Redlands, California: ESRI Press, 2002).



preserve their estate from social pressure and familiar fragmentation experienced throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the region. The case of hacienda La Torre reveals a landed estate progressively atomized by inheritance and land sales, giving shape to an area where numerous small holders and peasant communities found space to develop agricultural and informal commercial operations.

The third chapter is dedicated to Santiago Eder and his agricultural enterprise in hacienda La Manuelita. After following Eder's path from Russia to the Cauca River Valley, it analyses his adaptation to the manorial society of the valley as a landlord and merchant between 1864 and 1901. Then, it scrutinizes his agricultural endeavours, beginning with the plantation of coffee, with which Eder was introduced to agricultural production. Next he made investments in tobacco and indigo in other areas of the valley, and finally concentrated on sugarcane. The chapter defines the concept of the liberal hacienda as a mutation of the manorial agrarian structure in a free-market context, a promising agricultural company constrained by the natural limits of a geography that constantly impeded the transport of products to the Pacific coast. For Eder's liberal hacienda land worked as a commodity to be divided and traded in relation to other economic activities, a standing that contrasts to the hacendado's attachment to their land heritages or absentee landlordism.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Wealthy nature, unworthy people

Convinced of the importance of travelling for scientific practice, Isaac Holton, professor of natural history at Middlebury College in Vermont, explored the geography of New Granada –present Colombia–for twenty months beginning on August 21st, 1852. In the chronicle of his journey, published in New York five years later, Holton looked beyond his field of study, to focus on the particular social traits in the tropics, and the relationship between humans and their exotic natural surroundings. After touring through the Eastern and Central Andes Mountains, Holton followed the Cauca River upstream to reach the wide flatlands of the Cauca Valley. Fascinated with the landscape, he spent the time necessary to explore the region, visit various rural households, lodge in their chambers, and observe daily life within such a privileged environment. He came to the conclusion that in the valley, paradoxically, the power of a wealthy environment worked more as an obstacle than as an aid for social development. And so he asked:

What more could Nature do for this people, or what has she withholden from them? What production of any zone would be unattainable to patient industry, if they knew of such a virtue? But their valley seems to be enriched with the greatest fertility and the finest climate in the world only to show the miraculous power of idleness and unthrift to keep a land poor.<sup>1</sup>

About one hundred years later, Raymond Crist, professor of Geography at the University of Florida arrived in Colombia as a researcher associated with the John Simon Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations. His purpose was to elucidate a historical geography of the Cauca River Valley within the framework of agrarian modernization driven by the scientific mission of the Puerto Rican agronomist Carlos E. Chardon, inspired by the insights of the American New Deal. From his expertise in human geography and land tenure,

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac F. Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes* (New York: Harper & brothers, 1857), 488.

Crist assembled a historical narrative designed to support state mediation, through scientific knowledge, in the agricultural development of a region with such a productive potential. The 1952 book, *Cauca Valley Colombia, Land Tenure and Land Use* was the outcome of this exercise. In it, Crist identified a social system based on the predominance of large estates as the main source of the “inertia” and low productivity that held back this agricultural world from “progress”. In his words:

Inertia is a marked feature of the landscape characterized by great landed estates, which are not highly sensitive to ‘progress.’ [...] In developing the resources of Colombia, excessive space has been a handicap, but in the Cauca Valley, where, on the contrary, space is potentially valuable, the social system has kept it from acquiring value.<sup>2</sup>

From Holton to Crist, a narrative of the Cauca River Valley’s agrarian history was created together with the arrival of a novel way to understand, appropriate and transform nature. During the nineteenth century, scientific, journalist and business travelers played a role in the incursion of liberal thinking into Latin America, as researchers, communicators and pioneers for the opening of trade networks for tropical commodities. This chapter examines the portrayals of this agricultural landscape by Europeans and North Americans who visited Colombia in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup>-century, from different nationalities and trajectories, but driven by similar objectives and reaching related conclusions. Their publications addressed social and natural features of local landscapes ultimately to inform the decisions of investors and diplomats. Over time, their tales shaped a common narrative about Latin American nature and societies, which influenced the migration of northern settlers, the foundation of export industries, and the planning of local governments. In the case of the Cauca River Valley, the narrative of “wealth and misuse” encouraged the material

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond E. Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia: Land Tenure and Land Use* (Baltimore MD: Waverly Press, 1952), 35.

configuration of its agricultural landscape, leading to a socio-ecological transition towards sugarcane monoculture by the mid-twentieth century.

### **1.1 Portrayals of the Cauca River Valley's agricultural landscape**

Numerous European and North American naturalists, engineers, journalists, and writers traveled across the geography of Latin America's young republics throughout the nineteenth century. Despite their varied motivations, the act of traveling itself had become popular in the intellectual context of Enlightenment and Romanticism. An ideal of empiricism expected that true knowledge should emanate from experience, from the senses and perceptions of individuals, while interacting and experimenting with their object of study. Traveling was the proper way to understand natural and social systems around the world, especially in regions previously isolated by colonial curtains such as Latin America. However, not everything was about scientific knowledge. Often, economic and political incentives prevailed over the romantic curiosity of adventurers in exotic tropics.

The famous Prussian naturalist and humanist, Alexander Von Humboldt, set the model for 19th century travellers, when he visited the Spanish colonies with the French botanist Aimé Bonpland between 1799 and 1804.<sup>3</sup> During cruises in the Orinoco plains and the Andes Mountains, Humboldt found the inspiration to develop his particular theory about the natural world. It was his belief that nature should be conceived as a whole, a *Naturgemälde*, where every physical feature was connected to the other ones, and had to be understood as such in order to achieve universal scientific knowledge. In his words: "Nature considered *rationality* [...] is a unity in diversity of Phenomena; a harmony, blending together all created

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<sup>3</sup> Not many travellers from protestant countries got the chance to legally visit the Spanish colonies in America for three centuries. Humboldt's expedition was possible thanks to his influence as member of Berlin's nobility, and the fixation of the Bourbon crown on botanical expeditions throughout the eighteenth century.

things, however dissimilar in form and attributes; one general whole [...].”<sup>4</sup> Humboldt’s legacy permeated most of the scientific accomplishments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and set the ground for later ecological thinking by sketching the concept of ecosystem.<sup>5</sup>

Many North American and European travelers followed Humboldt’s steps in the Andes Mountains. Some brought strictly botanical, geological or astronomical concerns; others were driven by the romantic experience of travelling through exotic sceneries, while recording their adventures in artistic creations, both textual and graphic. One way or another, intentionally or not, foreign visitors played a political role in a transnational context. Some of these voyagers performed diplomatic roles that connected them to local politicians holding certain business and political interests, and regularly involved in local partisan struggles. Moreover, scientific information on geographies, plants and societies was decisive for merchants planning capital investments on commodities’ markets, and for foreign governments to support further colonial or commercial expansion. Finally, their stories about tropical landscapes shaped external conceptions about *exotic* natures and *backward* nations, often related with discourses of class and race.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after Colombian independence, the first foreign portrayal of the Cauca River Valley was made by British Colonel John Potter Hamilton in 1824. He was the first diplomatic emissary sent by the British crown to the recently created Republic of Gran Colombia, with the task to sign a treaty of trade and friendship. Hamilton undertook a long trip throughout the diverse provinces, during which he described in detail the situation of a society recently devastated by more than ten years of civil war. On the road, he depicted

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos* [1845], vol. 1 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1864), 2, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt’s New World* (New York: Knopf, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Strongly influenced by mainstream currents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century scientific scene, such as geographical determinism and social Darwinism, these travelers regularly explained the social realities in tropical regions through a reductive and simplistic explanation of race superiority.

particular environmental features that caught his attention, especially flora, fauna and minerals, and sketched attractive illustrations of landscapes and memorable episodes. Hamilton's general impression on the Cauca River Valley provides here a preview to introduce later authors, most of whom very likely read his *Travels Through the Interior Provinces of Columbia*.

We had now got well into the valley of Cauca and I found the favourable reports I had received relative to this vale had not been exaggerated; for I had seen no part of Colombia that could bear any comparison with this extensive valley, either in the fertility of its soil, or in the beauty of its scenery, and comfortable and respectable appearance of the country houses and cottages [...]. What might this valley become in twenty or thirty years, under a good government, possessing such great natural advantages?<sup>7</sup>

A quarter century later, naturalist Isaac Holton began his journey in the Andes Mountains. His motivation was strongly influenced by Humboldt, whose work is constantly referenced throughout the book, and whose insight guided Holton's approach to the holistic bond between societies and nature. For Holton, "human nature is indeed every where the same in its essence, but infinitely diversified by the modifying power of external circumstances. [...] Ancestry, soil, climate, occupation, bodily constitution, all have their power."<sup>8</sup> However, his emphasis on social aspects reveals common political biases of that time, characterized by geographical determinism, Eurocentrism and Anglo-Saxon supremacy.<sup>9</sup> And so he continued: "But almost every where [external circumstances] are borne down and modified, if not neutralized, by the resistless power of the great world of European civilization."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Potter Hamilton, *Travels through the Interior Provinces of Columbia*, vol. 2 (London: J. Murray, 1827), 133.

<sup>8</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 20.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Manuel Cuartas, "La Nueva Granada, La Utopía Continua. Reflexión a Partir de La Nueva Granada: 20 Meses En Los Andes de Isaac F. Holton," *Thesaurus : Boletín Del Instituto Caro y Cuervo* 50, no. 1–3 (1995): 627–45.

<sup>10</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 21.

Of all the sites he visited, the Cauca River Valley particularly piqued Holton's curiosity. His description of this landscape oscillated between astonishing natural conditions, the privileged landed families, and the misery of black communities. These topics captured the three cornerstones of the paradoxical relationship between nature and history in the tropics. When describing the entrance to the valley from the north, Holton provided a particular image of this landscape and the perceptions it evoked.

The western chain, along the base of which flows the Cauca, stretches from south to north in almost a straight line, and rising at a single leap to the greatest height between us and the Pacific. Not an inch of the Cauca is visible; so distant and so straight is it that the trees hide it entirely. This forest appears interminable above and below, and we forget the broad pasture plains between it and the mountains, and the innumerable cultivated patches and houses which it hides.<sup>11</sup>

When riding through the countryside, Holton was surprised by the agrarian prospects of the valley, where he mentioned yields of sugar cane, pastures, fields of cocoa, tobacco and rice, and a variety of garden crops. However, the element that especially caught his attention was the abundance of water and its particular management. Near Cerrito, Holton noticed that "much of the land about here is irrigated, and, therefore, of perennial greenness", thanks to the abundance of *acequias* (canals and ditches) that descended from the mountain slopes to the Cauca.<sup>12</sup> During the visit to the estate of Miguel Cabal, he noticed that despite the 20 miles that separated his sugar mill from the nearest water source, Cabal managed to get enough water through a long *acequia*. This was possible, in Holton's opinion, "thanks to the cheapness of labor, and the miraculous skill of Granadan acequeros."<sup>13</sup>

However, water was no longer a blessing for farmers when it came to transportation. As other visitors highlighted in their descriptions, agricultural production in the fertile flatlands was restrained by the lack of access routes toward internal and external markets. Within the

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<sup>11</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 435.

<sup>12</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 505.

<sup>13</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 510.

flatlands, the many *acequias* flowing from the mountain slopes to the Cauca River imposed regular obstacles in the traveller's path. Noticing the absence of proper bridges over the channels, despite a legal duty to provide them, Holton wrote:

If we rode rhinoceroses or hippopotami it would be different; but to be bespattered by your neighbors, to bespatter them, to bespatter yourself, and, worst of all, to fear being absolutely engulfed (sic) by the criminal negligence of rich landholders, is trying to patience.<sup>14</sup>

The matter of *acequias* reflected the continuities of a colonial agrarian system, in which landlords held rights to access water resources without major requirements, unless life in urban centers was affected. The poor maintenance of artificial ditches imposed physical boundaries among towns and properties in the valley. The problem was worst when important tracks were damaged by the abundant water in this landscape. Such was the case of the transport route between Palmira and Cali, which Holton defines as “the worst road in the world on account of mud”. Crossing the wetlands surrounding the Cauca River was a difficult project, which reinforced the isolation of the valley's flatlands. As Holton continued: “The distance between Palmira and Cali is given as 18 or 19 miles, but it is as far as a horse ought to travel in a day. At one place we had to unsaddle our horses and walk across a slough on logs, holding them by the halter lest they drown.”<sup>15</sup>

Holton spent more time in the Cauca River Valley than most nineteenth century travelers. There he found a parable to explain the characteristics and situation of New Granada society. The country was a timeless place, where ancient structures struggled with modern forces in the political arena without provoking significant changes in the daily life of the rural world. For this voyager: “[...] a Granadino sees day after day run away like so much Croton water, without concern, for there is an indefinite quantity of the same yet to come.

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<sup>14</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 500.

<sup>15</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 514.



The entire absence of clocks and watches aids this illusion.”<sup>16</sup> Such was the impression of the Cauca River Valley in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, where the privileged environmental conditions spoiled people and instilled no incentive to improve production or compete in the modern world. He concluded: “Another day has passed without making any more change in the Valley of the Cauca than on the face of the ocean. And so have passed generations.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1861, the French doctor Charles Saffray toured New Granada from the Caribbean Sea to the Amazon jungle. The tale of his trip was meant to be published in *Le tour du monde*, a recently created French journal dedicated to circulating portrayals of picturesque places through voyage stories around the world. Combining exciting tales and striking illustrations on several remote landscapes, *Le tour* consolidated the genre of 19<sup>th</sup> century European travel literature for a general audience.<sup>18</sup> Saffray’s narrative outlined tropes of adventure and exoticism that inspired scientists, politicians, entrepreneurs and literati with images of overseas countries.<sup>19</sup>

Besides Saffray, other French voyagers who visited New Granada in the framework of *Le tour du monde* were the botanist Edouard Andre, and the geographer Élisée Reclus, who mainly focused on the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta on the Caribbean coast. For his part, Saffray was fascinated with the province of Antioquia in the Central Andes Mountains, which became his point of comparison when describing other regions, such as the Cauca River Valley. Even though Saffray’s motivations were not strictly scientific, his chronicle frequently evoked the taxonomy of particular plants, and especially their medicinal

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<sup>16</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 476.

<sup>18</sup> Jorge Orlando Melo, “La Mirada de Los Franceses: Colombia En Los Libros de Viaje Durante El Siglo XIX,” Colombia es un tema, accessed February 21, 2018, [http://www.jorgeorlandomelo.com/mirada\\_franceses.htm](http://www.jorgeorlandomelo.com/mirada_franceses.htm).

<sup>19</sup> The scope of *Le tour du monde* even transgressed the limits between science and fiction through the literature of Jules Verne, inveterate reader of the journal. The influence of travelers’ narratives is especially evident in his book *Le tour du monde en 80 jours*, which can be read as a summary of and tribute to the stories published in the French journal. Actually, most of the original etchings in Verne’s book were made by De Riou, famous graphic artist of *Le tour du monde*.

properties. His tale differs from Holton's in language and emphases, though both authors articulated similar conceptions of environmental conditions in particular locations (Figure 1.1). Saffray's words recall Holton's ideas about the agricultural landscape in the basin of the Cauca River:

In that country the land is so favoured, I dare say too generous, because its fecundity slows progress. The intelligent and laborious farming required in Europe is not necessary there, thanks to the rich soil and benign climate; men need work only a few days to ensure a year of subsistence.<sup>20</sup>

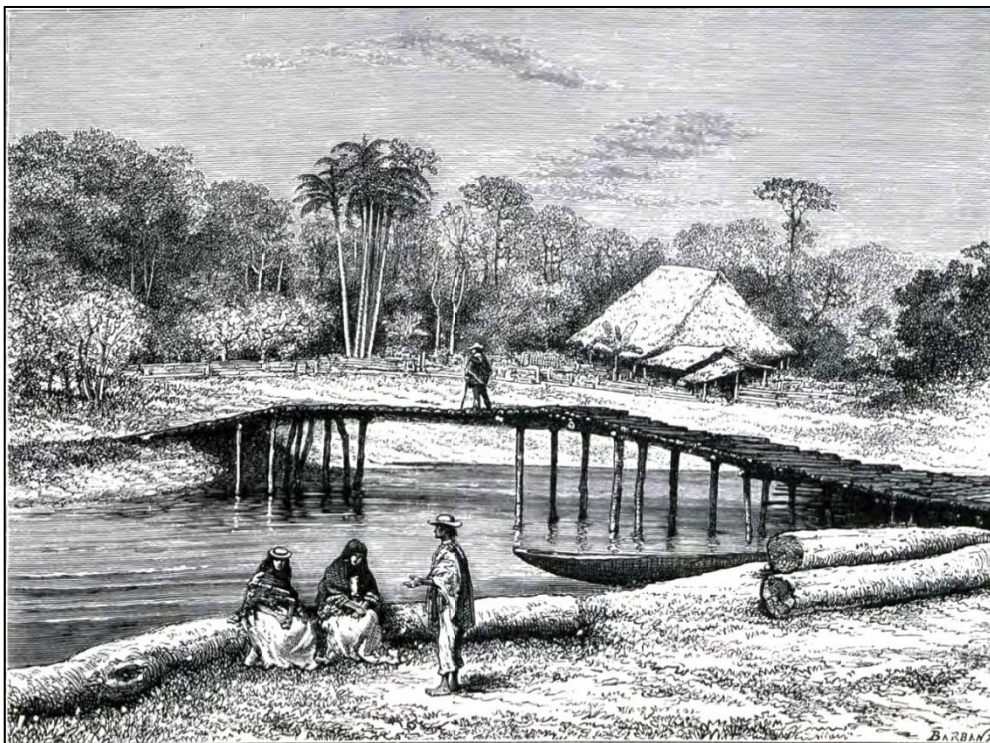


Figure 1.1: Landscape in the Cauca valley, drawing by De Riou.<sup>21</sup>

Here again a rich nature contrasted with an inefficient social and economic system, but for Saffray this interaction was explained through a relation of causality. In his perspective, while European environmental conditions “required” the development of “intelligent and

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada* [1869], trans. Ricardo Pardo (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1948), 217.

<sup>21</sup> Edouard de Riou, *Paisaje en el valle del Cauca*, n.d. etching. Pablo Navas and Benjamín Villegas, eds., *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2013), T.II, 35.

laborious” farming practices, in this part of the New World the wealth in soils and climate accustomed people to get abundant food with little work. Instead of the “idleness and unthrift” that limited Cauca Valley agriculture according to Holton, for Saffray, the reason for the misuse of natural benefits came from long-term human adaptation, in which historical environmental challenges were the driving forces of social “progress”. Therefore, people in the Cauca River Valley were victims of their habitat, and it was not possible to blame them for the backwardness of their livelihood. Saffray’s condescension toward the valley’s farmers denoted a romanticist approach to geographical determinism, in which the relationship with nature resembled the noble savage myth.

Cauca valley people are as happy as a man can be. In the middle of such beautiful nature they can easily satisfy their needs, which are always practical. They live every sweet affection, and do not aspire to the struggles of our large cities. The way of life observed there seems to be more in line with nature.<sup>22</sup>

Saffray supported this positive image of life in the Cauca River Valley with a summary of the agricultural products grown there: “Not only cocoa, tobacco and sugarcane is produced in the Cauca valley, but also potatoes, beans and wheat, though only in the highlands.”

Although, he accepted that “agriculture is neglected due to a lack of trails on which to export product; indigo, cotton and vanilla grow spontaneously, but are not farmed anywhere.”<sup>23</sup>

Despite such a variety of crops, perhaps informed by some of his hosts, Saffray acknowledged that “The main source of wealth in the Cauca valley consists of raising oxen and goats. Rich landowners boast thousands of head of cattle, and even in the most humble cabin there is a notable quantity of animals.”<sup>24</sup> From this point of view, a cattle culture of “valorous, bold and skilled” cowboys (Figure 1.2) covered the different social strata, relegating farming to the back burner for long time.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 229.

<sup>23</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 225, 226.

<sup>24</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 226.

<sup>25</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 229.



Figure 1.2: The *enlazada* in the Cauca valley, drawing by Neuville<sup>26</sup>

At the end of his journey through the Valley, Saffray underlined what he thought was the most valuable commodity grown in the country, and in the region in general:

New Granada is poised to become an important center of tobacco production. This crop deserves the focused attention of foreigners; it does not demand many advanced practices, and its price supports high transportation costs. The Cauca valley lends itself to this industry especially due to its excellent terrain, its regular seasons and its warm temperature, without excess heat.<sup>27</sup>

Saffray's narrative presents the bright side of the agricultural world in the valley, without hiding his critique of what he saw. Continuing the conclusion, he declares: "It takes only a little goodwill to be happy in the valley; with some more effort one can become rich, but judging from what I have observed one does not look for wealth, except when there is lack of happiness."<sup>28</sup> There was nothing particularly wrong in the agricultural situation of the Cauca River Valley, where people embraced a simple way of living to adapt to a rich but

<sup>26</sup> Alfred-Arthur Brunel de Neuville, *Enlazada en el valle del Cauca*, n.d., etching. Eduardo Acevedo Latorre, *Geografía Pintoresca de Colombia* (Bogotá: Litografía Arco, 1968), 34.

<sup>27</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 242.

<sup>28</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 242.

tough nature. A rhetorical sense of misappropriation of resources was revealed in the gap between ecological privilege and social lethargy. For Saffray, it was positive that people lived “happy” and “more in line with nature”, yet, the challenges of the modern world pushed them to take advantage of their privileged conditions, preferably with foreign investment, perhaps coming from a reader of *Le tour du monde*.<sup>29</sup>

Similar perspectives came from other French authors of *Le tour* in the next decade. Edouard André was a prestigious gardener and botanist commissioned by the French government in 1875 to study and collect samples of *bromeliads* plants in the Andes Mountains. Among all the outsiders who toured southwestern Colombia in the nineteenth century, it is fair to say that André was the best writer. His descriptions of landscapes, sunsets, exotic plants and particular scenes used a rich language full of imagery and metaphors, accompanied by impressive etchings made by illustrators in Paris based on André’s sketches. Because of the botanical purpose of this trip, André charted his route to privilege wild mountain ecosystems over transformed flatlands, such as the northern Cauca Valley, where he turned westwards from Buga to cross the Cauca River, penetrating the western Andes Mountain jungles through a wild trail from Vijes to Dagua. As he explained when selecting his route:

I began to tire of the monotony of the Cauca valley. I had gone there not so much to check on the state of civilization of this part of the country, which remains generally stable –where agriculture is almost completely reduced to the pastoral system–, but to study the natural products of less explored regions.<sup>30</sup>

Taking a different path did not preclude the traveller from admiring the singular scenery of this “vast plain embraced by two mountain ranges”. There, herds of cattle “frolic at ease over grass carpets”, among occasional “small forests of wonderful trees adorned with

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<sup>29</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 229.

<sup>30</sup> Édouard François André, “La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú),” [1883] in *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, vol. 2 (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2013), 17.



bright colors.” André portrayed a landscape highly transformed by humans, dominated by livestock, and with specific patches of wild nature in bamboo forests and wetlands. He continued: “Here and there, columns of smoke mark the places where jungle burns in the wake of recent *rozas* (slash-and-burn); sheaves of feathered bamboo indicate the wettest parts where, after the rain, men have reserved dry pastures for cattle.”<sup>31</sup> His lucid analysis highlighted the importance of the valley’s waterscape characterized by the wetlands surrounding the Cauca’s channel, which he comprehended as both wonderful ecosystems and burdens for human communication (Figure 1.3). While examining the 40 meters of slope between one side of the valley and the other, André asserted:

That little slope of barely 23 centimetres per kilometer, explains the hydrographic conditions against which our caravan frequently confronted: bogs or small connected lagoons, flooded forests, submerged pastures, swampy jungle, mud and ruts.<sup>32</sup>



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<sup>31</sup> André, “La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú),” 135, 136.

<sup>32</sup> André, “La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú),” 135.

Figure 1.3: The swamps in Cañitas, drawing by De Riou.<sup>33</sup>

André's description of the Cauca River Valley agricultural landscape arouse a unique poetic perception of the environment, combined with a keen ecological analysis. Moreover, his illustrations and maps provide valuable primary sources for Colombian natural and cultural history. But his narrative is not devoid of a critical understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, closely related to his predecessors' perception. In the countryside of Cartago, André described a place "where soils are fertile, the weather is lovely and conducive to health"; and where "minimal work of the earth guarantees material life." Then he asked: "What more can a sober people ask for, happy with what little they have, who instinctively know that 'to multiply one's joys is to increase one's burdens?'"<sup>34</sup> Again, the misuse of land resources in the Cauca River Valley was explained as the effect of prodigious environmental wealth over a spoiled society. Like Saffray, André presented the idea that simple livelihoods meant fewer necessities.

In the 1880s the traveller walking through this landscape was the German geographer and economist Friedrich Von Schenck. Unlike the cases seen so far, his travel was not driven by diplomatic, scientific or intellectual motives. Von Schenck sailed to America employed by the trading company Kissing & Möllmann from Iserlohn, Germany, with the aim of establishing business connections and assessing the social, political, and economic conditions of the country, with an emphasis on Antioquia. With this clear motivation, Von Schenck visited the country twice in 1878 and 1880, and his chronicles were published by the Geographical Institute Justus Porthes in 1883, where he included a sober tale of his journey, accompanied with data on prices and yields of specific products, plus topographic

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<sup>33</sup> Edouard de Riou, *El pantano de cañitas*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, T.II, 141.

<sup>34</sup> André, "La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú)," 8.

measurements. On his second trip, Von Schenck visited the Cauca River Valley, attracted by the increasing export movements through Buenaventura's port in the 1870s. His impression of the valley was shaped by his preference for Antioquia society, and a marked racist perspective.<sup>35</sup> When riding from Buga to Palmira, Von Schenck wrote:

As one approaches Palmira, the haciendas of the surrounding areas begin to appear less abandoned and the soil is better cultivated (though this should be understood in relative terms). The traveler who comes from Antioquia is struck by what little importance is given here to the cultivation of corn, as well as the preference for sugarcane, bananas, tobacco, and foreign pastures (Para and Guinea grass), which cover extensive paddocks for fattening livestock.<sup>36</sup>

By the time this traveler visited the region, the city of Palmira had taken off in the context of Cauca State. If in 1860 Palmira seemed a small town, by 1880 it had “a bustling energy which has surpassed that of the formerly more important Cali, which seems to have decayed considerably.”<sup>37</sup> Even if there were not mentions of specific names in his short visit to the valley, there is reason to believe that the positive perception of Palmira as a commercial city was influenced by local entrepreneurs, whose businesses with coffee and sugarcane were showing good results. From this mainly commercial perspective, three common features of the landscape were highlighted: the strategic geographical location of the valley close to the Pacific Ocean, the predominance of pastures over other land uses, and the burdens to transportation imposed by the Cauca basin's waterscape.

From Von Schenck's short stopover in the Cauca River Valley emerges a clear pattern in the influence of Antioquia as a contrast with the Cauca Valley. The fact that the trajectory of every expedition addressed so far, with the exception of John P. Hamilton, followed the route from Antioquia and Quindío to get to the Cauca River Valley is meaningful, considering the

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<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Von Schenck, *Viaje Por Antioquia En 1880* [1883], trans. Ernesto Guhl (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1953), 44, 45.

<sup>36</sup> Von Schenck, *Viaje Por Antioquia En 1880*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> Von Schenck, *Viaje Por Antioquia En 1880*, 44.



settlement process that was taking place in the western and central Andes Mountains. In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Antioquia emerged as a leading example of internal expansion in Colombia. The longstanding mass movement of *mestizo* and white peasant settlers from north to south in the western and central Andes Mountains created a phenomenon known as “Antioqueño colonization”. This settler process shaped a particular system of family units, experts in farming on mountain slopes and other areas marginalized by the manorial haciendas. By clearing forests for polyculture, Antioquian communities opened the agrarian frontier, allowing landed estates to expand, and adapting the ground for farming enterprises, specifically coffee. Over time, a culture of work and industry characterized Antioquian society, becoming a niche for liberal entrepreneurs and politicians, and attracting foreign travellers.<sup>38</sup>

In 1880, the Colombian government appointed a new professor of humanities for the National University, an institution founded in 1867. The young Swiss lawyer Ernst Röthlisberger was hired as professor of philosophy and history in 1881. Röthlisberger lived in the country for several years, during which he raised a family, strengthened the Colombian scholarly academy, and explored the variety of landscapes in the Andes Mountains. Back in Switzerland in 1897, Röthlisberger published the chronicle of his journey in a book entitled *El Dorado. Imprints of travel and culture from South American Colombia*. His narrative oscillates between coherent analyses of botanical, geological, and sociological topics, and romantic portrayals of landscapes, of which the tropical savannas of Orinoco particularly delighted him. In December 1884, Röthlisberger ventured to visit the provinces of Antioquia

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<sup>38</sup> A vernacular study on Antioqueño colonization that still relevant today, is the work of social historian Catherine LeGrand, in which she traces the roots of twentieth century peasant organization in the land concessions to Antioquian settlers on the western Andes Mountains. Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850 - 1936* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986).

and Cauca. Through his gaze, the Cauca River Valley was not just a unique and rich landscape, but appeared as a complex ecological phenomenon:

The Cauca Valley is not equally fertile everywhere. Some regions, due to deforestation and natural geological structure, are dry and sandy; others flood and form lagoons up to two meters deep, which makes them entirely unfit due to fevers which are present. But other regions, particularly those that are one half to one league away from the river, closer to the highlands and which have a thick layer of humus, provide a man with everything that can grow in the Torrid Zone in great abundance.<sup>39</sup>

This environmental approach to the valley was different from other descriptions, insofar as it suggested a diversity of ecosystems somehow connected in the landscape, some of them suitable for human use, and some less so because of deforestation and geological structure. Röthlisberger expressed the view of someone familiar with Colombian society, a specialist on the diversity of cultures and their dissimilarities among regions. This quality makes his narrative more cautious of generalizations, and sensitive to comparisons among regional cultural traits. For instance, he mentioned “a great similarity between the Cauca Valley and the *Llanos*. Here as there, dry savannas are burned, much cattle are raised, and the fishing is a profitable practice.”<sup>40</sup> Despite Röthlisberger’s cautious characterizations, his final assessment about the situation in the Cauca River Valley reveals a perspective not too distant from his predecessors:

Cauca is a land where milk and honey flows. Greater still would its blessings be if the blacks worked more, if people surrendered less to the *dolce far niente* and farmed their fields with more care, if Nature was not so generous with man, providing him with everything he needs, if, in any case, there were communication routes through which the exchange and export of products was faster to other countries. The Cauca would then be a paradise, and perhaps sociologists would be right to calculate twenty million (André says fifty million) as the future population of the valley.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ernst Röthlisberger, *El Dorado. Estampas de Viaje y Cultura de La Colombia Suramericana* [1897], trans. Antonio De Zubiaurre (Bogotá: Comisión Preparatoria para el V Centenario del Descubrimiento de América, Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, Banco de la República, 1993), 397.

<sup>40</sup> Existe, pues, un gran parecido entre el Valle del Cauca y los Llanos. Aquí, como allí se queman las resacas sabanas, se cría mucho ganado y se practica con provecho la pesquería. Röthlisberger, 398.

<sup>41</sup> Röthlisberger, *El Dorado*, 399.

This analysis highlighted certain elements not so evident in other authors. For instance, the failure of humans to seize nature's "blessing" was directly related to the leisure of "blacks", an idea characteristic of racial determinism and very common in Colombia at that time. Moreover, Röthlisberger provided a straight chain of factors from natural wealth, misuse of land, and lack of "communication routes" for export, to a possible "paradise". A paradise able to sustain an estimated population of twenty million inhabitants, clearly exaggerated given the scarcely 100,000 people in the valley then, and the five million today. The conclusion reached by Röthlisberger in 1884 reaffirmed the narrative used by Holton, Saffray, and André, whose books were an evident influence on the Swiss professor. The reiteration of the same paradox about humans and nature in the Cauca River Valley continued from one author to another across five decades, revealing the power of this narrative. The fact that more than five decades after Röthlisberger's travels, new visitors from northern countries would echo the same plot, but from a different historical context, demonstrates the power of stories to transform this agricultural landscape once and for all.

## **1.2 Narratives in transition**

Compelling trends arise from these narratives of travellers to the Cauca River Valley, suggesting a correspondence between individual experiences. There is no proof, except for sporadic mentions, that voyagers read their predecessor's publications when treading the same path, yet they did not contradict each other's judgments of the same reality, and even coincided in extremely similar perceptions and concepts. In such intellectual accord is where powerful narratives succeed, constraining historical facts to enduring values shaped in particular moments in time. According to William Cronon: "although narrative may not be intrinsic to events in the physical universe, it is fundamental to the way we humans organize

our experience”, and the way that we want to organize our experience is a matter of culture and politics.<sup>42</sup>

Some particular elements of their narrative structure are important to consider. Even though the authors incorporated historical elements into their tales through mentions of pre-Columbian and colonial events, theirs are mainly geographic narratives: stories of change across space. Despite the name of “chronicles”, these narrations are not purely accounts of items in various locations or through trip stages; the authors articulate stories of experiences and perceptions, they describe, analyze, judge, compare, and evoke feelings. Trip tales are spatial narratives, in which the search for causes and effects to explain a reality is demoted to the personal assessment of each author, depending on where he or she separates scientific knowledge from cultural prejudices.

The ideal of the Cauca valley’s natural wealth was a common opening scene in the selected sources. Geographical richness was revealed through reiterations of soil fertility, mild climate and abundant water as the proper conditions to spread farming, along with wild ecosystems with a prominent diversity of fauna and flora for hunting, fishing and gathering. Plant inventories with taxonomies and their uses supported the potential diversity of farmed plants, especially in the books by Holton, Saffray and André. Domesticated crops included maize (*Zea mays*), plantain (*Musa paradisiac*), cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*), and fruit trees such as orange (*Citrus Aurantium*), lime (*Citrus aurantifolia*), lemon (*C. Limetta*), sapote (*Pouteria sapota*), and guava (*Psidium guajava*), among others. The cash crops emphasised were: tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), sugarcane (*Saccharum officinale*), indigo (*Indigofera*

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<sup>42</sup> Following David Carr’s interpretation of Martin Heidegger’s theory, Cronon reaches a compelling conclusion about the key role of narrative for historical analysis, with an emphasis on environmental history. Cronon quoting Carr: “Narrative is not merely a possibly successful way of describing events; its structure inheres in the events themselves. Far from being a distortion of the events it relates, a narrative account is an extension of one of their primary features.” William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1368.

*tinctoria*), cotton (*Gossypium*), vanilla (*Vanilla*), and rice (*Oryza sativa*). Additionally, the guadua (*Guadua latifolia*), generalized as bamboo, appears as a cultivated forest for the multiple uses of its wood (Figure 1.4).<sup>43</sup>



Figure 1.4: Bamboo bridge in La Paila River, drawing by De Riou.<sup>44</sup>

Another important component in the portrayal of the Cauca valley's nature regarded the particularity of its waterscape. Even beyond travellers, almost every assessment from observers about this landscape accentuated the importance of abundant water streams and wild wetlands as decisive factors. In the various narratives such hydrologic features represented vital resources for irrigation, fishing and materials, and also considerable limitations for human settlement and transport. In Holton's text, appreciations about the

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<sup>43</sup> The appendix of Holton's book included an inventory of the plants mentioned throughout the text with scientific nomenclatures. Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 605; Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 255; André, "La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú)," 17.

<sup>44</sup> Edouard de Riou, *Puente de guadua en el río La Paila*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, T.II, 14.

several streams that crossed the flatlands varied according the situation. When the topic was agriculture, the network of *acequias* were beneficial and necessary for successful farming, but when it came to crossing streams to follow a trail, they were “filthy” and “moody” obstacles.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, wetlands imposed a significant geographical limit to the integration of the region in the past by impeding straight line communication between Cali and the eastern side of the Cauca River. As an exception, given his preference for wild scenery, André developed a fascination for this ecosystem as a niche for a huge diversity of flora and fauna (Figure 1.5). In his words, these were “flooded flatlands [of] inextricable marshes, where large yusieuas (sic) with willowy leaves, violet melastomataceae, bamboos, diverse arundinacea, and aquatic ferns surround us at every turn.”<sup>46</sup>

The perception of nature presented by Holton, Saffray, André, Von Schenck, and Röthlisberguer is bound to the naturalist thinking of the Enlightenment, as established by Humboldt after his expedition to the same tropics. In order to comprehend a natural environment inhabited for a long time, such as the Cauca Valley, these travellers presented a holistic tie between humans and nature. A relationship characterized by the “generosity” of nature, depending on the author, determined whether their story had a positive or a negative trajectory. For Holton and Röthlisberguer, the privileged natural conditions in the valley motivated the configuration of a culture of leisure, defined as a tendency toward “idleness and unthrift” for the American, and as an inclination to the “*dolce far niente*” for the Swiss.<sup>47</sup> For Saffray and André, the inhabitants of this landscape adapted to such “favoured” natural

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<sup>45</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 500, 510.

<sup>46</sup> André, “La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú),” 18, 135, 138.

<sup>47</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 488; Röthlisberger, *El Dorado. Estampas de Viaje y Cultura de La Colombia Suramericana*, 399.



conditions by developing a simple or “sober” livelihood. In André’s words, these people understood, that “to multiply the joys is to increase the burdens”.<sup>48</sup>

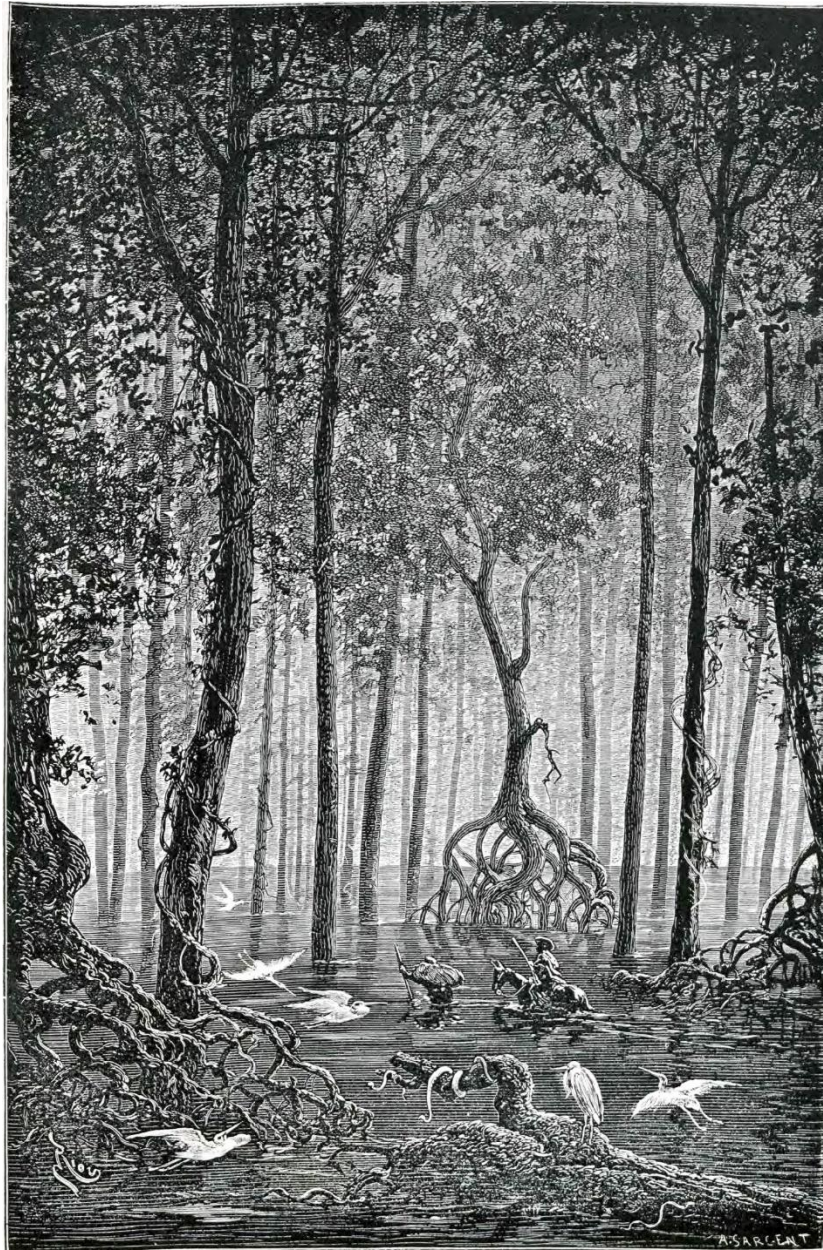


Figure 1.5: Flooded forest in the Cauca River, drawing by De Riou.<sup>49</sup>

Either because of leisure or adaptation, the socioecological relationship in a context of natural wealth explained a history of mismanagement of natural resources. Such perception

<sup>48</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 217; André, “La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú),” 8.

<sup>49</sup> Edouard de Riou, *Bosque inundado en el río Cauca*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, T.II, 21.

of “misuse” contrasts with a teleological ideal of “proper use”, which is closely related to the economic interests behind both travelers and liberal policies. A driving force of nineteenth century discourses of “progress” and the conditions necessary to achieve “civilization”, a proper use of tropical nature implied the production of commodities for export to international markets. In such a logic, this was the only way for “backward” countries to accumulate the capital needed to improve infrastructure, uphold industrialization, and thus enter the list of “modern nations.”<sup>50</sup> An original scenery of natural wealth and a cessation of static misuse was necessary to support a narrative of liberal progress. Quoting Cronon: “Our narratives take changes in the land and situate them in stories whose endings become the lessons we wish to draw from those changes.”<sup>51</sup>

Far from simple, the plot of misuse on this landscape consisted of various elements that could change from author to author. It was articulated through a narrative about nature, humans, and the relationship between them, a narrative that was scientific as much as it was political. It comprised every group in the society through an ambiguity that sometimes focused on black peasant communities, and other times on landed elites. It resulted in a portrayal of a landscape marked by inertia, which resembled the continuities of an everlasting colonial system. As Holton said: “Another day has passed without making any more change in the Valley of the Cauca than on the face of the ocean. And so have passed generations.”<sup>52</sup>

This inertia was principally the result of a dominant land use, according to all of these travellers: extensive cattle ranching. Following the spread of imported African grass species, guinea (*Panicum maximum*) and par  (*Brachiaria mutica*), since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, livestock raising in the flatlands was only further reinforced, and with it the system of land

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<sup>50</sup> Stuart McCook, *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Cronon, “A Place for Stories,” 1370.

<sup>52</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 476.



tenure based on large landed estates. Not entirely critical of the cattle-based economy, but neither fully interested in its development, the travellers' chronicles disclosed a bond between the monotony of livestock and the broad misuse on Cauca's fertile flatlands. As André put it: "I began to tire of the monotony of the Cauca valley [...] where agriculture is almost completely reduced to the pastoral system."<sup>53</sup>

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When the Liberal Party recovered power in 1930, after a long period of Conservative governments since 1884, new incentives to encourage agricultural modernization of the Cauca River Valley began. By then, novel approaches to land use, land tenure and social inequality went hand in hand with new insights from the social sciences, and in the framework of post-1929 economic crisis policies.<sup>54</sup> The Colombian government, along with international cooperative projects, supported scientific missions, with the aim to assess the agricultural situation of the country and establish guidelines for policies toward agrarian development, technological improvements, state economic regulations and land reform. At the epicenter of this wave, the Cauca River Valley received various scientific missions from the 1930s to the 1950s. The most significant was led by the Puerto Rican agronomist Carlos Chardon in the 1930s with the support of the United States government and the Rockefeller foundation.<sup>55</sup>

Chardon himself was a devotee to the 19th century naturalist travellers in the New World, about whom he wrote two books and two journal articles, one of them introducing the

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<sup>53</sup> André, "La América Equinoccial (Colombia, Ecuador, Perú)," 17.

<sup>54</sup> Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970*.

<sup>55</sup> Sonia Milena Jaimes Peñaranda and Olga Lucía Delgadillo Vargas, "Misión Chardon y La Modernización Agrícola En El Valle Geográfico Del Río Cauca, Colombia.," 2018. Unpublished.

life of Edouard André.<sup>56</sup> Along with these “devoted soldiers of the great army of science”, as he defined them, Chardon shared the viewpoint about the Cauca River Valley’s agricultural landscape, a place of prodigious fertility but constrained by a static agrarian system.<sup>57</sup> Chardon’s mission led to the greatest environmental transformation for agricultural purposes in Colombian 20<sup>th</sup> century history, when government, business and traditional elites gathered together to expand sugarcane mono-cropping across this “misused” landscape. The manorial hacienda played a key role in this perception of the valley by favouring social prestige over economic productivity in the logic of land tenure, for which cattle ranching had become the most effective way to gain and retain large extents of land. In Crist words: “The control of land in great estates, the bases of many of which are historical rather than economic, have meant a defiance of certain so-called economic ‘laws’. Advantage has not been taken of site in the first place.”<sup>58</sup>

Traveler narratives reveal the liberal ideal of proper land use for Cauca River Valley’s agricultural landscape. An ideal that remained hindered by the long-lasting dynamics of a traditional society and the stereotypes of the European way of thinking about tropical environments and peoples. Influenced by such narrative and attracted by the trade opportunities opened by the liberal economy, some new settlers of the Valley in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century started to planning future agricultural enterprises. Meanwhile, traditional landowners either reinforced the cattle ranching activities to maintain the areas of their inherited lands, or decided to sell to sustain their urban life.

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<sup>56</sup> Carlos E. Chardon, *Los Naturalistas En América Latina* (Caracas: Editora Sucre, 1941); Carlos E. Chardon, *Boussingault : Juicio Crítico Del Eminente Agronomo Del Siglo XIX Su Viaje a La Gran Colombia y Sus Relaciones Con El Libertador y Manuelita Saenz* (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora Montalvo, 1953); Carlos E. Chardon, “Longevity and Casualties among Naturalists in Tropical America,” *The Scientific Monthly* 64, no. 3 (1947): 198–207; Carlos E. Chardon, “Edouard Andre (1840-1911), Jardinero-Naturalista y Sus Viajes Por Colombia y El Ecuador,” *Caldasia* 4, no. 19 (1947): 283–92.

<sup>57</sup> Chardon, “Longevity and Casualties among Naturalists in Tropical America,” 198.

<sup>58</sup> Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia: Land Tenure and Land Use*, 34.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “If you sell land, you eat land”

When studying the situation of land use and land tenure on the Cauca valley in 1951, Raymond Crist identified the problem of *prestige tenure* as a decisive factor to understand the territorial configuration of the region over time.<sup>59</sup> In Crist’s belief, three centuries of Spanish colonial domination entrenched the manorial system of landholding in the wealthy flatlands of Cauca River’s middle basin. Such a system of land tenure, in his words, “was not conducive to intensification of agriculture on the most fertile land for the economic well-being of the greatest number; rather it was conducive to the encroachment of pastoralism on cropland.”<sup>60</sup> After political independence, and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such a situation did not change much. On the contrary, the economic crisis pushed *criollo* (non-Spaniard) elites –civil, military and clerical– to accumulate and protect the land as the basic socially-accepted source of individual power, despite the increasing numbers of dispossessed communities in the region, either black or *mestizo*. For Crist, the social system of the manorial hacienda in the Cauca River Valley was a “straitjacket which brought on an acute case of social arthritis and economic anemia.”<sup>61</sup>

Despite the truthfulness of Crist’s analysis on the impact of the manorial system over historical land use and social inequality in the valley, his portrayal of the hacienda presents it as a static, overwhelming, and timeless unit of production. However, evidence suggests that by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the majority of manorial haciendas in the Valley had either disappeared or considerably reduced their lands, in parallel with the appearance of alternative agricultural productive systems. The liberal reforms from the 1840s to the 1870s

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<sup>59</sup> Raymond E. Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia: Land Tenure and Land Use* (Baltimore MD: Waverly Press, 1952), 35.

<sup>60</sup> Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia*, 25, 26.

changed rules of labor and real estate that defined the meaning of the colonial haciendas. In addition, an incipient export-based economy promised new financial opportunities and a demographic wave of peasant settlers spread across the valley's flatlands. The political, economic and social conditions in the 19th century were not the same as when the colonial manorial hacienda system ruled in the Cauca River Valley.

This chapter follows the rise and mutation of the manorial hacienda system in the Cauca River Valley, in order to demonstrate that the definition of hacienda assembled by the agricultural modernization narrative based in the paradigm of "wealth and misuse" was more complex than presented. The landed estates in the basin of the Amaime River during the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century reveal that the manorial system mutated in different ways, particularly in its logic of appropriation and transformation of land and nature.

## **2.1. Genesis and logic of the manorial hacienda**

Contrary to appearances, owning land was not the main concern of Spanish *conquistadores* at the dawn of the colonial period, insofar as there was plenty of it and few Europeans to own it. Instead, labor was more important than land. Since the *Leyes de Indias* (Indian Laws) of 1542, the institution of *Encomienda* (entrust) became the arrangement designed to control Indian labor to exploit mines and supply urban centers, two pillars upon which the entire Spanish system relied.<sup>62</sup> In short, *Encomiendas* were immense states, economically and politically attached to corresponding Indigenous communities, and owned by the crown but granted to colonial local authorities under the form of entailment. Therefore,

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<sup>62</sup> In exchange for Indian taxes or *Tributos* and personal services, the conquerors granted with an *encomienda* had to look after the security and evangelism of the colonized communities. However, as the historian Magnus Mörner points out, "as an institution the *encomienda* did not imply any rights to the lands of the Indian," which were limited to communal ownership under the form of *Resguardos*, or Indigenous common lands. Magnus Mörner, "Economía Rural y Sociedad Colonial En Las Posesiones Españolas de Sudamérica," in *Historia de América Latina*, vol. 3 (Barcelona: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 123. Magnus Mörner, "The Spanish American Hacienda: A Survey of Recent Research and Debate," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (1973): 186.

when Indigenous demography decreased due to systematic exploitation and European diseases by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *encomienda*'s territories gradually acquired a private property meaning, shaping the subsequent advent of the manorial hacienda.<sup>63</sup>

The origin of the Latin American hacienda is blurred in the diversity of historical and geographical conditions from California to La Pampa. In 1957, Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz outlined a well-known definition for the concept of hacienda as “a rural property under a dominating owner, worked with dependent labor, employing little capital, and producing for a small-scale market.”<sup>64</sup> Considered as a particular economic unity, the model of the hacienda was born under the conditions of 17<sup>th</sup> century demographic and economic vicissitudes across the continent. The dramatic decrease of Indigenous population undermined the colonial system and its core economic institutions, reliant upon aboriginal labor and extractive markets. In parallel, the expansion of urban markets due to emergent elites and exponential growth of *mestizaje* (racial mixing) increased the demand and prices of European agricultural products, such as wheat and meat, creating the conditions for the hacienda to thrive as exclusive supplier.<sup>65</sup> From another perspective, demographic decline triggered a mining crisis throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which provoked the effects of *demonetarization* and stabilization of prices in local markets. The result was a context in which the hacienda emerged as a self-

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<sup>63</sup> The historical link between these institutions has been subject of historiographical debate since the 1960s, to some extent because, in words of Magnus Mörner, “the concepts of *encomienda* and *hacienda* cover an infinitely varied reality”. Mörner, “The Spanish American Hacienda,” 187. Despite the fact that the *encomienda* strictly relied on the presence of Indian communities while the *hacienda* not, and that there existed far more *haciendas* than *encomiendas*; according to James Lockhart, the labor systems used in both were identical, both shared an hereditary and aristocratic social system, and both served as effective bridges between rural and urban worlds. James Lockhart, “*Encomienda and Hacienda: The Evolution of the Great Estate in the Spanish Indies*,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (1969), 410-429.

<sup>64</sup> In: Mörner, “The Spanish American Hacienda,” 185.

<sup>65</sup> In the 1950s, the US historian Woodrow Borah, researching Mexico's colonial demography, revealed the tied association between Indigenous population drop and the colonial economic crisis of late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. From his perspective, the hacienda emerged as a market-orientated unit of production, becoming a sign of the demographic reliance on non-Indigenous majorities. In cases such as the valley of Mexico, the Sabana of Bogota and Chile the original haciendas appeared to supply such demand, as units of agricultural production no longer dependent on Indigenous labor, and adapted to the growing urban elites dedicated to trading and mining activities. Mörner, “The Spanish American Hacienda,” 188.

sufficient economic unit to exclusively supply the mines, most of them owned by the same landlords.<sup>66</sup>

Whether the hacienda exhibited a self-sufficient nature, or whether it followed a market-orientated performance, two facts arose from this historiographical discussion. One is that Indigenous demography was crucial for the origin and structure of haciendas, and second, throughout the continent, the hacienda was a dynamic, adaptable, and long-lasting economic institution. Simultaneously, the question for the non-material dimension of the Latin American hacienda complemented the discussion, by revealing its role in the formation of a particular political culture in the continent. The historical perception of the landlord as a male social authority, political leader, and military commander relied upon the size of his landed estates, as sources of social prestige and political power. In this logic, the spatial expansion of the haciendas obeyed different agendas beyond their productive efficiency; it was bound to a need by the local elites to accumulate, preserve and enlarge *land* in order to accumulate, preserve and enlarge *power*.<sup>67</sup>

As an economic unit, the hacienda faced the paradox of pasture expansion and over-production for the limited consumption of local markets, which only makes sense by considering the cultural and political value of land. As social systems, haciendas relied upon

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<sup>66</sup> Also focused on the valley of Mexico, the French historian François Chevalier formulated an origin of the hacienda in close relationship to the needs in silver mines. François Chevalier, *Land and Society in Colonial Mexico: The Great Hacienda* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

<sup>67</sup> As early studies showed for Mexico, the power achieved through land grabbing worked in different ways. Chevalier pointed out that one of the strongest motivations for Mexican hacendados to expand was “not to increase [their] earnings, but to eliminate rivals and hold sway over an entire region.” Moreover, David Brading explained the increasing land investments of Mexican miners and merchants in times of crisis as a strategy to hold social prestige and investor confidence, something similar to the dynamics shown by German Colmenares in the Cauca River Valley, as will be seen below. Monopoly of land not only allowed local oligarchies to acquire status, it also provided credit confidence for speculation, stimulating the accumulation of wealth, control of labor and capture of rents. In the long term, such logic shaped the model of the hacienda that survived the independence process, defining the structures of social and political relationships in different scales and scopes across Latin America. This historical phenomenon has had many names –*caudillismo*, *gamonalismo*, *caciquismo*–, and has been a corner stone of Latin American post-independence political history. Mörner, “The Spanish American Hacienda,” 192, 194.

a monopoly of productive lands and a limited workforce, which depended on the fluctuations of demographic rates between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Social and economic historiographies have coincided to accept that the productive performance, historically based on cattle ranching, has been a secondary purpose of landed states, as long as landownership was a source of social prestige, political power, and financial credibility.<sup>68</sup>

However, recent approaches to the topic from environmental history encourage a reconsideration of this traditional meaning of landed estates, and the idea of cattle ranching as a byproduct of *prestige tenure*. Environmental historian Shawn Van Ausdal argues that Latin American historiography has generalized the problem by defining ranching as “a means to an end much more than an end in itself.”<sup>69</sup> In the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century social struggles against land distribution inequality, his study of cattle ranching in Colombia reveals oversimplifications from both conservative and left-leaning ideological corners.<sup>70</sup> Following Van Ausdal’s thesis, this research seeks to challenge the assumption of a prestige-over-production logic behind Cauca River Valley’s haciendas in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>71</sup> To do so it examines the land use and land tenure of selected haciendas in the basin of the

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<sup>68</sup> Historians have been very cautious to scrutinize their analysis of landed estates through their social, geographic and historical context. As Mörner affirms when concluding his article: “to understand the role and development of the haciendas, it seems even more important to place them, or the entire agrarian structure in a certain district, in an ecological context and to determine the cartographical dimensions through time.” Mörner, 215. Likewise, German Colmenares appeals to consider the change over time of Cauca Valley’s states before stating generalizations between 18<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century haciendas. Although, he does not neglect the preponderance of *prestige tenure* as driving force of the land monopoly in the region. Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes. Siglo XVIII*, 34.

<sup>69</sup> Shawn Van Ausdal, “The Logic of Livestock: An historical geography of cattle ranching in Colombia, 1850-1950” (Ph.D., University of California, 2009), 3.

<sup>70</sup> While left-leaning historians have exaggerated the negative impact of ranching states, right-leaning versions have overstated its role in the economic development of the country. Shawn Van Ausdal, “Ni calamidad ni panacea: Una reflexión en torno a la historiografía de la ganadería colombiana,” in *El poder de la carne*, ed. Alberto Flórez Malagón (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2012), 28–46. A thorough effort to understand the logic of livestock development between 1850 and 1950 has been neglected, and hence a detailed study of the productive and environmental features within the units of production such as the manorial haciendas. Van Ausdal, “The Logic of Livestock,” 5.

<sup>71</sup> The aim is not to deny the evident responsibility of landed estates in the development of an extremely unequal society such as Colombia’s, nor to neglect the social and ecological degradation of a long-term extensive-grazing-based economy. Rather it aims to understand the diversity within the Cauca valley’s haciendas, their internal logic and relationship with nature, in a historical context of economic opening, social renewal, and political instability.

Amalme River, by approaching their social, economic and ecologic dynamics in a context of historical vicissitudes.

### **2.1.1 The Cauca River Valley, a niche for manorial haciendas, 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries**

The Cauca River Valley became a pre-eminent place for the consolidation of the hacienda system during the colonial period. A geography shaped by wide tropical flatlands soon captivated European attention, eager for suitable landscapes to raise cattle and, eventually, to grow sugar cane. However, the natural limits imposed by large wetlands and patches of dry tropical forest, together with an absence of major Indigenous population, derailed the establishment of significant urban centers in the broadest part of the valley. Instead, cities were founded in the northern area of the flatlands (Cartago and Buga), and in the western banks of the Cauca River (Cali) near aboriginal population centers (Figure 2.1). Due to the harsh conditions imposed by dense forests and unpredictable hydrologic cycles, the Indigenous communities did not occupy the flat areas. Hence, the pre-Columbian settlement pattern privileged the mountain slopes, where a wider variety of products could be farmed through Andean vertical agriculture.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> The most important pre-Columbian settlement in this landscape was located on the slopes at the western side of the Cauca, in the valley of *Lile*. The population there is estimated at over 30,000 inhabitants when Spaniards arrived, which by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was reduced to less than 10,000. Their agriculture was based on maize, yucca, palms and fruit trees. In that place was founded the manorial city of Cali by Sebastian de Belalcazar in 1536. José Vicente Rodríguez Cuenca, *Pueblos, rituales y condiciones de vida prehispánicas en el Valle del Cauca* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2005), 30, 31.





Figure 2.1: Detail of map of the Cauca River Valley, 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup>

In the colonial spatial distribution, the Cauca River Valley was aligned in a north-south axis from Cartago to Popayan, connected by a *camino real* (royal road) (Figure 2.2).<sup>74</sup> Through this bridle path circulated, on one hand, most of the products and goods sent from the Caribbean Coast towards the manorial cities of Popayan, Pasto, and Quito, and, on the other hand, all the cattle raised in the valley was destined to major cities even beyond the mountain ranges. Because of the natural border imposed by the big Cauca River, the city of Cali was relatively isolated from this transport axis for a long time, holding a closer connection to the mining regions of the Pacific coastline (Figure 2.1). In the middle of such a transport axis, the flatlands of the Cauca River Valley offered a strategic location for local markets, in between urban centers with a constant demand for agricultural supplies, particularly meat, and not so far from important gold mines. It was a perfect niche for manorial haciendas and extensive cattle ranching.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> N.A. *Río Cauca*, [ca. 1700]. AGN, Sección mapas y planos, Mapoteca 6, Ref.: 98, parte derecha.

<sup>74</sup> Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940: Espacio, Poblamiento, Poder y Cultura* (Popayan: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, 2013), 40.

<sup>75</sup> Germán Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes. Siglo XVIII* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1975), 43.



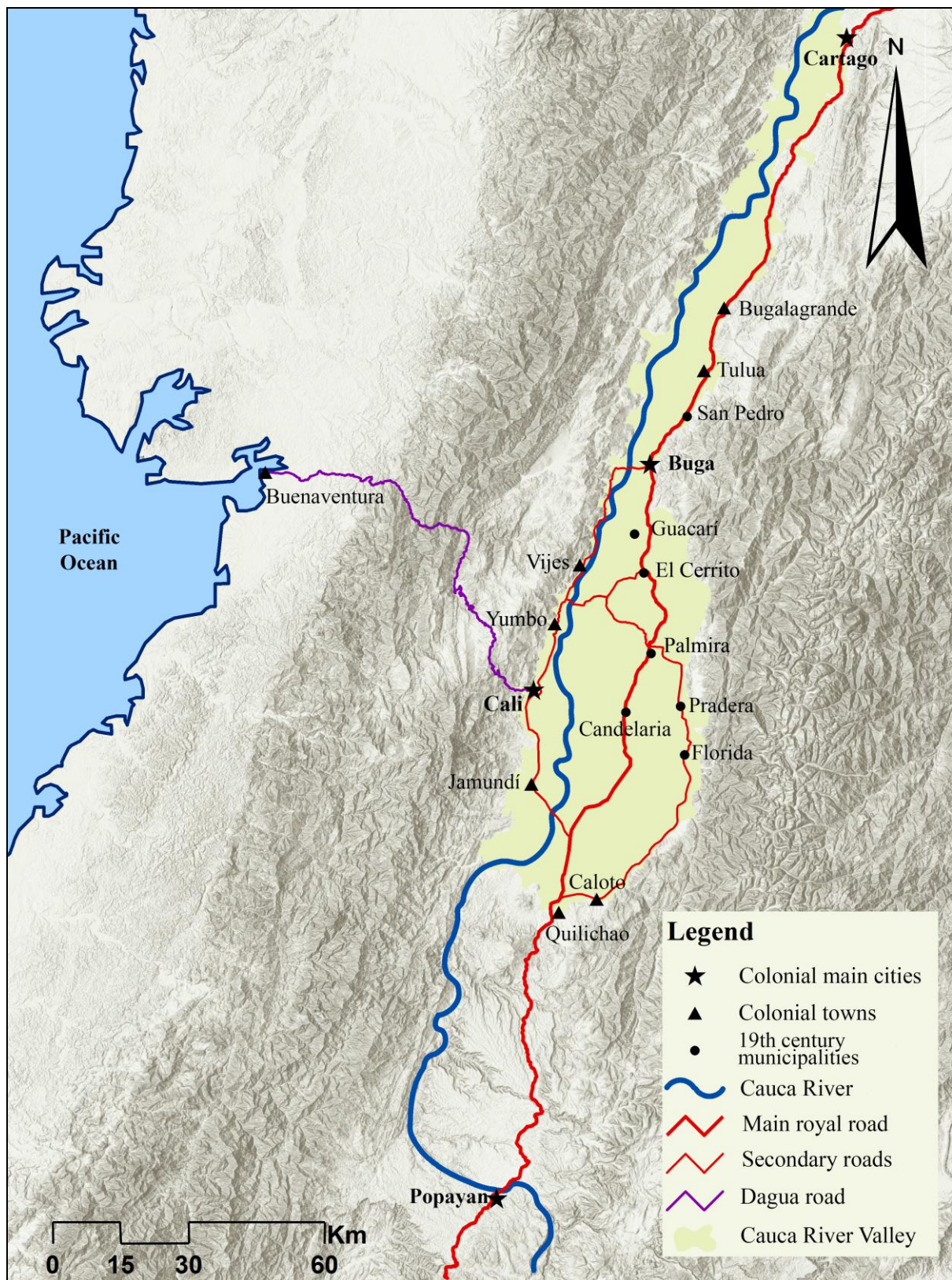


Figure 2.2: Spatial order in the Cauca River Valley, colonial period and 19<sup>th</sup> century

At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the land was distributed among the offspring of the *conquistadores* who followed Sebastian de Belalcazar in his 1530s campaign from Peru to the northern Andes. While the estates located in the area surrounding Cali in the western side of the Cauca River were the most desirable and expensive, because of the access to Indigenous labor and closeness to the city and the mines beyond the mountains, the properties in the eastern flatlands followed an alternative process. In exchange for the lack of population, the eastern side of the River offered boundless land in flat terrain, facilitating the early monopoly in a few landed estates of massive proportions.<sup>76</sup>

By 1600, Gregorio Astigarreta was a renowned landlord of the region, whose landed estate monopolized the space between Buga and the Amaime River, where he introduced the first sugarcane plants to the valley. After his death in 1605, his estate started a long process of fragmentation, which gradually diversified the owner families in the region and set the ground for the formation of haciendas.<sup>77</sup> South of the Amaime, the lands of Llano Grande (present Palmira) were granted to the conquistador Pedro Cobo and, after his death in 1545, passed to his sons. Lázaro and Andrés Cobo owned these plains until inheritances and purchases split the area into several estates, the most important of which was eventually acquired by the Jesuits.<sup>78</sup>

Although this first land fragmentation process of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was limited to a few influential families, it inaugurated a pattern of real estate movements that would continue throughout the following centuries at different scales. In response to the widespread economic crisis in the colonial system, the land became the main source of capital for absentee owners, who found ways to transfer and negotiate rural properties among

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<sup>76</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*.

<sup>77</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Alonso Valencia Llano, "Encomiendas y estancias en el Valle del Cauca," *Historia Y Espacio* 3, no. 11–12 (1987): 36.

themselves without renouncing the social prestige bestowed by land, through purchases, marriages, and inheritances.<sup>79</sup> According to German Colmenares, the fragmentation of landed estates began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and accelerated throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when new economic elites of merchants and miners emerged in the region, mostly concentrated in the city of Cali.<sup>80</sup> It was through these new landowners that the then ruling system of land tenure shaped the model of the hacienda in its Cauca valley form.

Unlike the Mexican case, which has served as a model in the historiographical discussion, the origin of haciendas in the Cauca River Valley was not directly linked to the Indigenous labor supply. Instead, the labor system behind these haciendas was the surplus African slave labor of the flourishing mines on the Pacific coastline.<sup>81</sup> These haciendas offered constant supplies of meat and sugarcane products (distilled liquor) to the mines and the gradually busier urban centers.<sup>82</sup> *Aguardiente* (liquor) was a low bulk product with high demand and value in mining areas, but monopolized by the colonial authorities. In consequence, 18<sup>th</sup>-century haciendas became logical units of production in the context of a wider regional economy designed to deal with transportation problems imposed by nature. A busy real estate market transformed this landscape into a surveyed mosaic of productive units, composed of small sugar cane crops close to artisanal sugar mills, some subsistence farms standing by the African slave quarters, and extensive pastures for livestock.

In this landscape, the basin of the Amaime River was home to some of the most well-known haciendas on the eastern side of the Cauca by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While the haciendas

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<sup>79</sup> In the notarial information gathered by German Colmenares, in 1637 were recorded in Buga transfers of 32 properties for a total of 1,094 pesos oro, 78% of them with a price below 50 pesos, and 22% big enough to exceed 50 pesos. Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 29, 33.

<sup>80</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 34.

<sup>82</sup> The official distinction between *Estancias de ganado mayor* (ranches of major livestock) and *Haciendas de trapiche* (sugar mill haciendas) evidenced this dual productive vocation, though in practice both denominations refer to manorial haciendas. Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 37.

Cerrito, Trejo and El Alisal covered lands on the right bank of the Amaime, under the jurisdiction of Buga, on the left bank were located the estates of San José de Amaime, Abrojal, Malimbú and Hacienda Real. Based on the notarial data gathered by Colmenares, the tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate the material configuration of some of these haciendas through their prices and percentage of investments at various points in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In general, the data reveals the low value of land (average of 17% of total assets) in contrast to the investments in livestock (average of 35%) and slaves (average of 35%) (Table 2.1). This notarial data reveals that, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the agricultural logic in the valley privileged investments in labor, crops, and livestock in the assessment of an estate's monetary value, a sign of a greater concern in the use of the land than a simple logic of *prestige tenure*.<sup>83</sup> The trend of investments shows a privilege on the diverse kinds of livestock first, and sugarcane second, which was accompanied by the construction of *trapiches* (artisanal sugar mills) (Tables 2.2 and 2.3). The formation of these haciendas relied on investments in infrastructure, agriculture, and labor by owners involved in urban business, establishing new rules of real estate prices and new means to appropriate nature.

Hacienda	Year	Lands	%	Livestock	%	Slaves	%	Other	%	Total
Trejo	1726	\$500	3	\$7357	45	\$3950	24	\$4294	26	\$16101
Amaime	1749	\$3300	21	\$6252	40	\$4020	25	\$1964	12	\$15536
Abrojal	1755	-	-	\$3388	45	-	-	\$1200	16	\$7338
Malibú	1755	\$800	6	\$5448	43	\$3690	29	\$2677	14	\$12615
Alisal	1766	\$4300	16	\$7900	31	\$10500	41	\$2773	10	\$25473
Aggregate		\$8900		\$30345		\$22160		\$12908		\$77063

Table 2.1: Disaggregated prices in pesos oro of the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 54, 55.

Hacienda	Year	Cattle	Horses	Mules	Foals	Donkeys	Oxen	Total
Trejo	1719	1000	385	-	25	2	18	1430
Amaine	1749	1200	200	10	-	1	-	1411
Abrojal	1755	500	105	7	-	2	4	618
Malibú	1753	-	744	-	113	2	-	859
Alisal	1766	937	350	55	-	-	-	1342
Aggregate		3637	1784	72	138	7	22	5660

Table 2.2: Livestock quantities in the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.<sup>85</sup>

Hacienda	Year	Trapiche	Houses	Tools	Sugarcane	Plantain	Canals	Fences
Trejo	1719	-	\$800	\$100	-	\$250	\$360	\$50
Amaine	1749	\$897	\$220	\$51	\$600	\$50	-	\$15
Abrojal	1755	\$324	-	-	\$350	\$30	-	-
Malibú	1753	\$1214	\$187	\$35	\$590	-	-	-
Alisal	1766	\$903	\$680	-	\$600	\$100	\$400	\$30
Aggregate		\$3338	\$1887	\$186	\$2140	\$430	\$760	\$95

Table 2.3: Prices in pesos oro of the investments on the haciendas at the eastern side of the Cauca River, based on sale inventories from 1719 to 1749.<sup>86</sup>

Three elements characterized the hacienda model consolidated in the Cauca River Valley during colonial times. First, their economic structure was historically dependent on mining activities on the Pacific coastline.<sup>87</sup> Second, the *hacendados* of the valley were an archetype of absentee landlordism. Landowners managed their estates through trusted stewards while living in the cities where they held their public and business duties. In this sense, agriculture was a secondary concern for most *hacendados*. Their physical absence suggests a disconnection with land and nature, often related to ideas of backwardness or

<sup>85</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 58.

<sup>86</sup> Colmenares, *Cali: Terratenientes, Mineros y Comerciantes*, 73.

<sup>87</sup> Although African slaves working on sugarcane production resemble the Caribbean plantations, Cauca River sugar production throughout 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries developed on a smaller scale and restricted to a local market.

urban-rural gaps. Third, as the dominant form of land use in the *haciendas*, cattle ranching consolidated as a representative activity of the Cauca River Valley. It served as a focus of investment and a means to hold sway over the flatlands prior to the appearance of wire fences or physical estates boundaries.<sup>88</sup>

## **2.2. “If you sell land, you eat land”**

Through many generations, a saying has passed among the Molina family in regards to their rural heritage in the basin of the Amaime River: “if you sell land, you eat land.”<sup>89</sup> The expression reflects the position of a particular social group towards land ownership dynamics in the Cauca River Valley. In response to the social, economic and political conditions provoked by the liberal era since the 1860s, the traditional landed families in the valley had to reconsider their relationship with the land. If they wanted to preserve their rural assets, they had to inhabit and work the lands inherited from a not so distant manorial past. By moving from absentee landlordism to active management, these families mutated the manorial hacienda and changed their understanding and use the valley’s land and nature.

However, in the transfer between generations, many heirs did not make the same choice. Some opted to sell the land and try their luck in the city, fragmenting patrimonial estates and opening the doors for new actors to seize the valley’s privileged resources. After the atomization of landed estates, newcomers and former owners, wealthy and poor, Colombian and foreigner, found opportunities to acquire a portion of productive land. Additionally, opportunities emerged for former slave families to grasp terrain, form communities, and generate a livelihood, some by legal means, and others at the margins of

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<sup>88</sup> Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia*.

<sup>89</sup> The saying was shared by Diana Chavez and Felipe Molina, today owners of the buildings of the hacienda La Concepción de Amaime.

the system.<sup>90</sup> Either by holding or by dispersing the land, the 19<sup>th</sup> century generation of hacendados were agents of change in the Cauca River Valley's agricultural landscape.

### **2.2.1 La Concepción de Amaime: bulwarks of the land tradition**

The lands on the right bank of the Amaime River were a niche for some of the most powerful estates in the region during colonial times, such as the hacienda El Alisal. In its manorial version, this landed estate comprised a massive area with uncertain boundaries, mainly covered by extensive native pastures with sporadic patches of sugarcane fields and canopies of tropical dry forests. Lavish country houses and chapels, with their colonial-style architecture, excelled as shelter for periodic visits by members of various branches of the prestigious Cabal Barona family. In daily life, small African slave hamlets of wooden huts were attached to patches of sugarcane fields and artisanal mills, surrounded by flocks of cattle herded by skilled mestizo cowboys. However, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century such manorial landscapes had changed in drastic ways. The area of the haciendas decreased considerably as the Cabal family split the lands among heirs, while freed slave communities settled in peripheral spaces, becoming tenants and wage workers in a novel free labor market. Yet, the use of the land continued to be dominated by livestock and sugarcane, besides scattered subsistence crops.

The haciendas that resulted from the division of the old El Alisal in the basin of the Amaime River, from east to west, were El Paraiso, Pie de Chinche, La Providencia, La Concepción and a diminished El Alisal. The information about boundaries, and therefore estimated areas, displayed in Figure 2.3 come from diverse sources, including testaments, loans, or purchase deeds in the notarial offices of Cali, Palmira, and Buga.<sup>91</sup> Among these

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<sup>90</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano* (Cali: Universidad del Cauca, 1993).

<sup>91</sup> For El Paraiso: Land purchase contract between Aquilino Aparicio and Primitivo Valencia, 1889, T.45, First Notary, AHC, Cali, Colombia; For Pie de Chinche: Land purchase contract between Vicente Pérez and Chavez



estates, El Alisal and La Concepción were the most privileged, due to their location exclusively on flat terrain with wide access to the basin of the Amaime River, which both estates surpassed for about 2.5 kilometers. These two haciendas represented the continuities and ruptures of the manorial order in this part of the valley through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A close review of their trajectory, productive logic, and material conditions reveals how the manorial hacienda evolved through the liberal era.

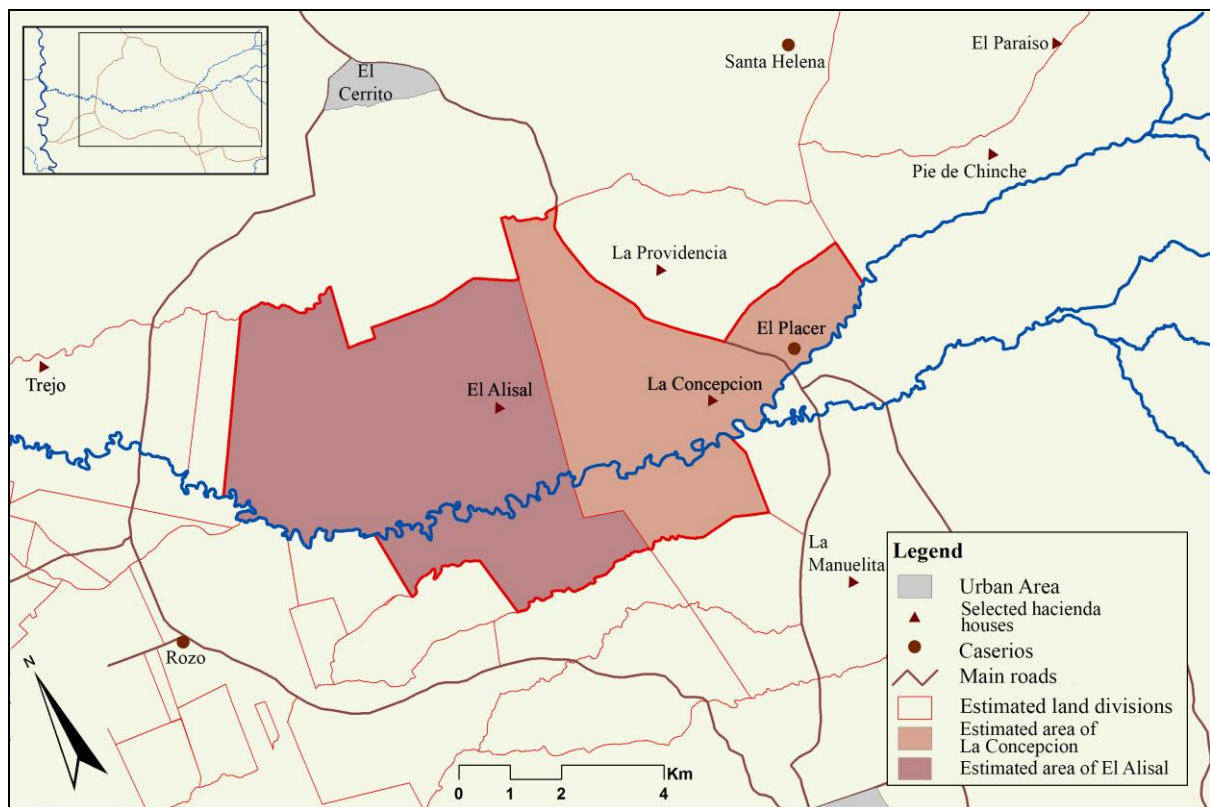


Figure 2.3: Spatial location of the haciendas El Alisal and La Concepción in the basin of the Amaime River, second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the hacienda La Concepción de Amaime belonged to Bárbara Cabal and José María Molina Martínez, heirs of two of the most important families in the city of Buga. During the 1840s, they managed to increase the estate's lands by purchasing a

González, 1889, T.49, First Notary, AHC, Cali, Colombia; For El Alisal: Carlos Martínez Escobar, will date October 27, 1877, box 77, AHB, Buga, Colombia; La Concepción: Bárbara Cabal, will date June 17, 1845, Buga, box 2, PAMF, Palmira, Colombia.

*cacaotal* (cocoa plantation) in 1845, and territory known as El Guaval south of the Amaime River in Hacienda Real, in 1846.<sup>92</sup> Cabal's death that same year left the hacienda under Molina's charge, at least until their four sons reached adulthood. As direct heiress of the estate, her will included a detailed appraisal of the material constitution of the hacienda, revealing its wealth and peculiar agricultural use (Table 2.4). Split into four lots, the land rights of La Concepción represented the 28% of the total value, followed by 24% for 1,036 head of livestock including oxen, horses and mules, and 14% in 30 slaves whose liberation must have been already anticipated at just 5 years before final abolition in 1851. On a smaller scale, the crops represented 13.9%, most prominently in 8,000 cocoa trees, apparently in good condition given their high price, in contrast with a limited 6 *suertes* (parcels with undefined measures) of sugarcane, some plantain and fruit orchards surely for subsistence. Finally, infrastructure represented 12%, but for some reason, the will did not take the luxurious chapel into account.<sup>93</sup>

Item	Quantities	Price (pesos)	%
Land rights	4 lots	\$10,636	28
House buildings	3	\$3,850	
Trapiche	1	\$500	12
Other infrastructure	-	\$271	
Acequia	-	\$267	
Tools	-	\$143	8
Other goods	-	\$2,683	
Slaves	30	\$5,461	14
Livestock (aggregate)	1,036 (head)	\$9,084	24
Sugar cane	6 (suertes)	\$180	
Cocoa trees	8000	\$5,000	14
Plantain	7 (almudes)	\$82	
Orchard	1	\$50	
<b>Total</b>		\$38,207	100

<sup>92</sup> Land purchase contract between Dolores Cabal and José María Molina, August 1, 1845, Buga, PAMF, box 2, Cali, Colombia; Land purchase contract between Braulio González and José María Molina, June 20, 1856, Palmira, PAMF, box 2, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>93</sup> Bárbara Cabal, will date June 17, 1845, Buga, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

Table 2.4: Appraisal of the assets in the hacienda La Concepción from the testament of Barbara Cabal in 1845.<sup>94</sup>

Whereas the main ranching vocation of the hacienda is not surprising within the agricultural context of the valley, the small scale of sugarcane crops in proportion to the size of the estate is revealing. The hacienda El Trejo to the west of La Concepción was similar. The will of Bernardino Molina, José María's father, in 1844 detailed the presence of only 3 *suertes* of cane, in contrast with 4,750 cocoa trees.<sup>95</sup> The dominance of cocoa is explained by the increasing demand of the bean from the Antioquian mountains at the north end of the valley, and the capacity of this plant to be grown near the wetlands in the river's basin, which also helped the farmers to clear productive land in former wastelands.<sup>96</sup> Despite its possession of a working sugar mill (*trapiche*) of considerable dimensions and a significant African slave labor force, in 1845 La Concepción was not reliant on sugar production.

In 1863 José María Molina died without signing an official will, so his assets, calculated in \$40,204 pesos, were equally distributed among his four decedents: María Joséfa, Bernardino, Enrique and Adelaida Molina Cabal. His testament showed that the hacienda La Concepción experienced key changes from the one portrayed in his wife's will 18 years earlier (Table 2.5). During that time, José María made an important investment in sugarcane crops, whose value dramatically increased from 180 pesos in 1845 to 900 pesos in 1863, while the cocoa trees decreased by a 42%. Also, important upgrades were made to the *trapiche*, whose value grew from 500 to 1400 pesos. The tools to process cocoa had a value

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<sup>94</sup> Bárbara Cabal, will date June 17, 1845, Buga, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>95</sup> Accounts of hacienda EL Albion, 1893, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia. Although the ambiguity in the size of a *suerte de caña* makes it difficult to calculate the size of the crops, comparing the prices established for each item in the testament reveals the insignificance of the crop within the whole appraisal.

<sup>96</sup> The Antioquian demand for cacao increased in parallel to the settlement processes started in the Central and Western Andes Mountains. Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 130. The ability of the cocoa tree to grow in wetlands explains patterns of this crop in wetlands surrounding the Cauca River found in the wider notarial information. This hypothesis deserves further research.

of 104 pesos. Despite the release of the slaves, Molina found the way to maintain, and even enhance, the operation of the hacienda.

Item	Price (pesos)		%
Land rights	\$8,484		28
House buildings	\$2,440		
Trapiche	\$1,400	\$4,120	14
Other infrastructure	\$280		
Tools	\$265		
Fences	\$120	\$385	1
Livestock (aggregate)	\$12,595	12,675	42
Chicken	\$80		
Sugar cane	\$900		
Cocoa trees	\$2,100		
Guinea pastures	\$1,440	\$4,460	15
Fruit trees	\$20		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$30,124</b>		<b>100</b>

Table 2.5: Appraisal of the assets in the hacienda La Concepción from the testament of José María Molina in 1863.<sup>97</sup>

Additionally, Molina improved livestock production in the hacienda by planting pastures of African guinea grass (*Megathyrsus maximus*) valued at 1,440 pesos, evidence of investment to increase cattle productivity. Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the introduction of “artificial” grasses (as people often called the guinea and para (*Brachiara mutica*) grasses) became widespread across the Cauca River Valley, increasing the number and value of pasture lands and strengthening the cattle ranching activities in the flatlands. The number of cattle in La Concepción grew from 1,036 to 1,202, particularly in the number of oxen, which rose from 700 to 1,009, and chickens were introduced. In consequence, the percentage of total value represented by animals on the hacienda almost doubled from 24% in 1845 to 42% in 1863. The boom of cattle ranching in this part of the valley was documented by the Italian geographer Agustín Codazzi when his Geographic Commission visited the Cauca State in

<sup>97</sup> José María Molina, will dated August 1, 1863, box 77, AHB, Buga, Colombia.

1855. The livestock census he performed (Table 2.6) reveals Palmira, Buga, and Tulua as three of the four cantons with the highest cattle numbers, representing 18%, 11% and 11% of total livestock in the Cauca State respectively. In this region particularly excelled Palmira, where Codazzi found 49,000 cattle and 16,000 horses. The growth of the livestock economy implied over time an expansion of artificial pastures over the remaining areas of native forest in the Valley's flatlands, following a path of deforestation evident in other areas of the country, including the Central Andes Mountains and the Caribbean Savannas.

Canton*	Beef	Sheep	Goat	Pork	Horses	Mules	Donkeys	Total	%
Popayán	24,098	9,524	666	2,700	5,670	1,315	172	44,145	9
Almaguer	19,793	8,650	86	3,200	4,960	1,507	167	38,363	9
Silvia	9,200	5,300	400	8,000	7,500	2,000	124	32,524	7
<b>Quilichao</b>	17,370	525	450	2,500	14,000	1,800	150	<b>36,795</b>	8
<b>Caloto</b>	14,500	700	500	14,500	4,600	2,000	57	<b>36,857</b>	8
Micay	425	12	25	260	0	0	0	722	1
Iscuandé	250	0	0	100	0	0	0	350	0
<b>Buga</b>	22,850	2,100	2,765	14,000	6,160	1,650	71	<b>49,596</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Palmira</b>	49,000	1,250	1,650	10,000	16,000	1,100	68	<b>79,068</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Tuluá</b>	25,000	400	800	15,000	10,000	500	18	<b>51,718</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Cartago</b>	38,000	1,000	1,500	8,500	3,750	700	100	<b>53,550</b>	12
Anserma	2,300	320	220	9,000	1,050	1,100	32	14,022	3
Supía	1,130	25	100	410	890	100	5	2,660	1
Toro	4,000	0	300	3,000	500	300	20	8,120	2
<b>Total</b>	227,916	29,806	9,462	91,170	75,080	14,072	984	448,490	100

\* Bolded names for cantons with complete or partial jurisdiction in the Cauca River valley

Table 2.6: Livestock census made by the Geographic Commission led by the Italian geographer Agustin Codazzi in the Cauca State in 1855.<sup>98</sup>

Although the monetary values were subject to the economic trends of the country, and the percentages influenced by the removal of the slaves factor in the testaments, these numbers evidence a greater concern for the land by José María Molina after the death of his wife. Perhaps he even moved from the city to the hacienda household to conduct the quiet life

<sup>98</sup>Agustín Codazzi, *Jeografía física i política de las provincias de la Nueva Granada*, Nabu public domain reprints (Bogotá, 1856), Vol. 4, 145.

of farmer and rancher. Such a choice was possible within the rural context of the region, where fellow hacendados followed similar paths, fostering new commercial activity outside the cities and breaking the manorial pattern of absentee landlordism.<sup>99</sup> This lifestyle was portrayed and popularized by the writer Jorge Isaacs in his 1869 novel, “María”, which would become the most important literary book of 19<sup>th</sup> century Colombia. Set in the picturesque landscape of the Cauca River Valley, “María” recalls Jorge Isaacs’ youth through an idyllic love story with a maid in his father’s haciendas.<sup>100</sup> Isaacs’ father was a Jamaican merchant who arrived in the Cauca valley in 1840, where he acquired important haciendas, including El Paraiso and La Manuelita, both in the basin of the Amaime River (Figure 2.3).<sup>101</sup>

“María” idealized the way of life in the countryside of the Cauca River Valley through a romantic view of people living within an overwhelmingly appealing and abundant nature. Throughout the book, the feelings aroused by María found a link with selected elements of the valley’s landscape, creating a connection between woman’s beauty and the aesthetics of nature typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic literary currents. The description of everyday manners in the haciendas in Isaacs’ novel also idealized the labor relationships within the slave system, in an attempt to mend the image of the hacienda families in a context of ongoing abolition. At the beginning of the book, when the main character returns to the valley after completing his studies in Bogota, Isaacs provided an interesting description of the performance of the hacienda and the dynamics of rural life:

During my absence at Bogotá my father had made great improvements: a fine and expensive sugar-mill, many acres of cane to supply it, large pastures with droves of cattle and horses in them, good stables, and an excellent house for the overseer were the most notable things about his farms in the *tierra caliente*. The slaves were well clad,

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<sup>99</sup> Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 57.

<sup>100</sup> Jorge Isaacs, *María: A South American Romance* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890).

<sup>101</sup> In the 1820s, Isaacs traveled to New Granada to establish an import office in the city of Quibdó, Chocó, in the Pacific jungles north of Buenaventura. He married Manuela Scarpetta Ferrer, with whom he moved to the Cauca Valley, hometown of the bride’s family.

and as happy as it is possible for slaves to be, and were docile and even affectionate towards their master”<sup>102</sup>

Such investments followed the standard developments in the valley’s haciendas by that time, focused on improving the production of sugarcane and livestock. Although there is no data on the productivity of the Isaacs’ haciendas, it is clear that Jorge Enrique Isaacs (father) had several financial problems, particularly due to his inclination to gambling. When he died in 1861, his properties were subject to nine mortgages from unpaid debts with over 30 creditors, who in 1863 came together to spur a public auction of the Isaacs family succession, particularly of their coveted real estate. In this dispersal, the hacienda La Manuelita was purchased by North American entrepreneur Santiago Eder, who would transform it into a liberal-orientated agricultural unit, as will be addressed in the next chapter.<sup>103</sup>

Back in La Concepción, after the distribution of José María Molina’s estate, his eldest daughter María Josefina and her husband Rafael Rebolledo sold their part of the hacienda to her brothers, Bernardino and Enrique for 10,000 pesos. They explained the transaction by stating: “it is not useful or convenient for them to manage the land rights, for their value they expect money and some other assets.”<sup>104</sup> The brothers made an offer to their other sister, Adelaida, for her part on La Concepción in exchange for their shares in their father’s house in Buga and part in cash, this because “it suits to them to administer altogether that part of the heritage.”<sup>105</sup> As in other cases of land inheritance, the daughters soon opted to sell land to support their life in the cities. In contrast, the Molina brothers not only maintained the

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<sup>102</sup> Isaacs, *María*, 10.

<sup>103</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado and Armando Moncayo Urrutia, “La Transición de Hacienda a Ingenio Azucarero Industrializado En El Valle Geográfico Del Río Cauca, 1850-1925” (Tesis de Licenciatura, Departamento de Historia, Universidad del Valle, 1986).

<sup>104</sup> Land purchase contract between María Joséfina Molina, Bernardino Molina and Enrique Molina, December 10, 1863, Buga, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>105</sup> Land purchase contract between Adelaida Molina, Bernardino Molina and Enrique Molina, December 12, 1863, Buga, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

hacienda's extent, but stayed in the countryside to work as full-time ranchers and farmers, following their father's example.

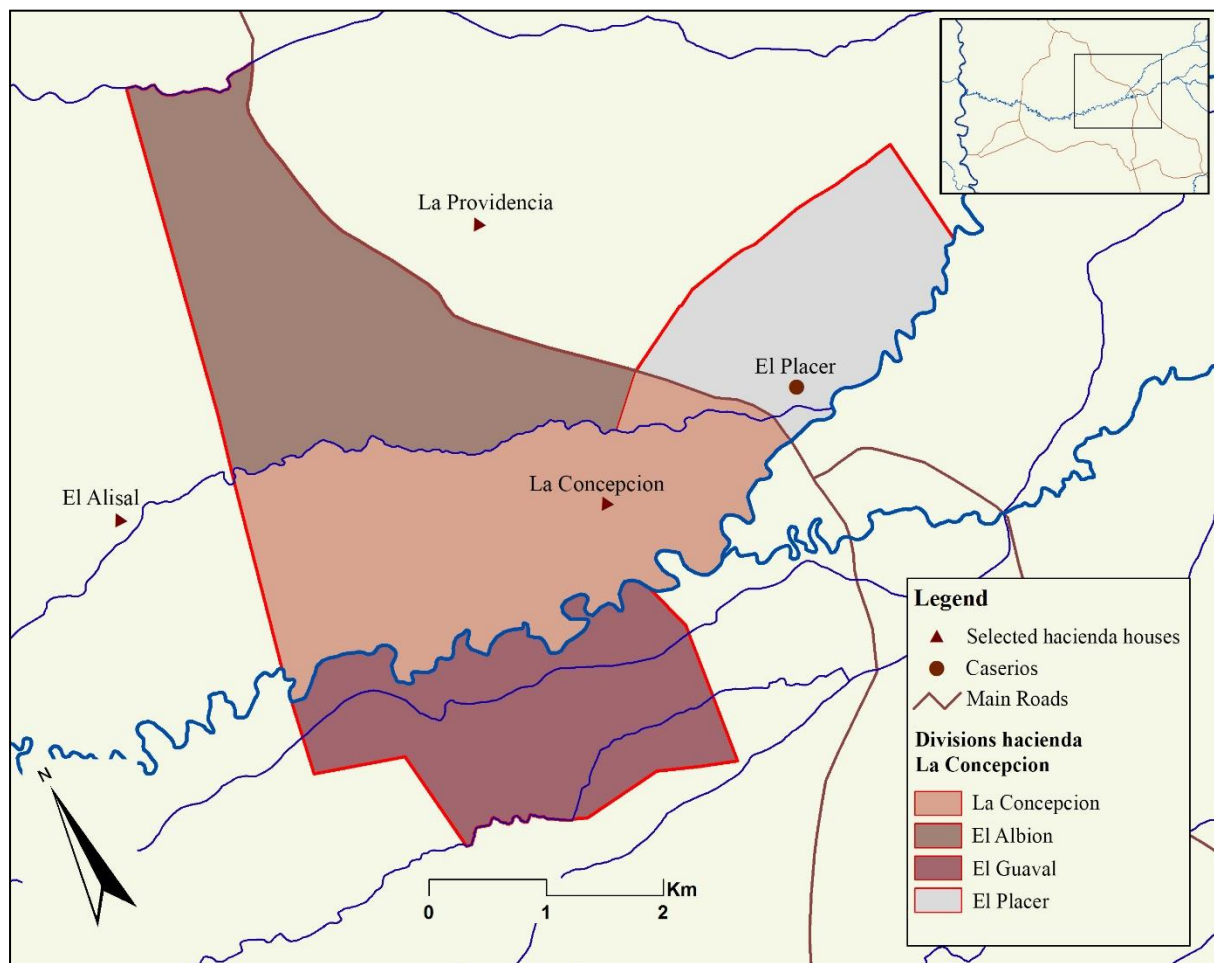


Figure 2.4: Distribution of lands within the hacienda La Concepción, 1890.

The Molina brothers kept working the lands of La Concepción through the next several decades. Bernardino, as firstborn son, occupied the hacienda house and surrounding lands, and Enrique lived on the northern section of the estate, named El Albion (Figure 2.4). In practice it seems that both brothers shared the operation of the hacienda. The eastern part of the estate was known as El Placer, one of the hamlets of freed slaves along the road towards Buga. Sporadic mentions of this section in the Molina's documentation suggest that the lands were still legally possessed by the family, a situation that would change at some point when El Placer became a small town of informal commercial activities and subsistence farming.



Enrique's personal notebook for the years 1878 to 1886 is the only source available to trace the activities in La Concepción before the 1890s. In it, information is scattered among daily procedures, fleeting accounts, reminders, debts, lists, and even children's drawings (Figure 2.5), though it discloses the main responsibilities and concerns of the author in regards to his agrarian life in El Albion.

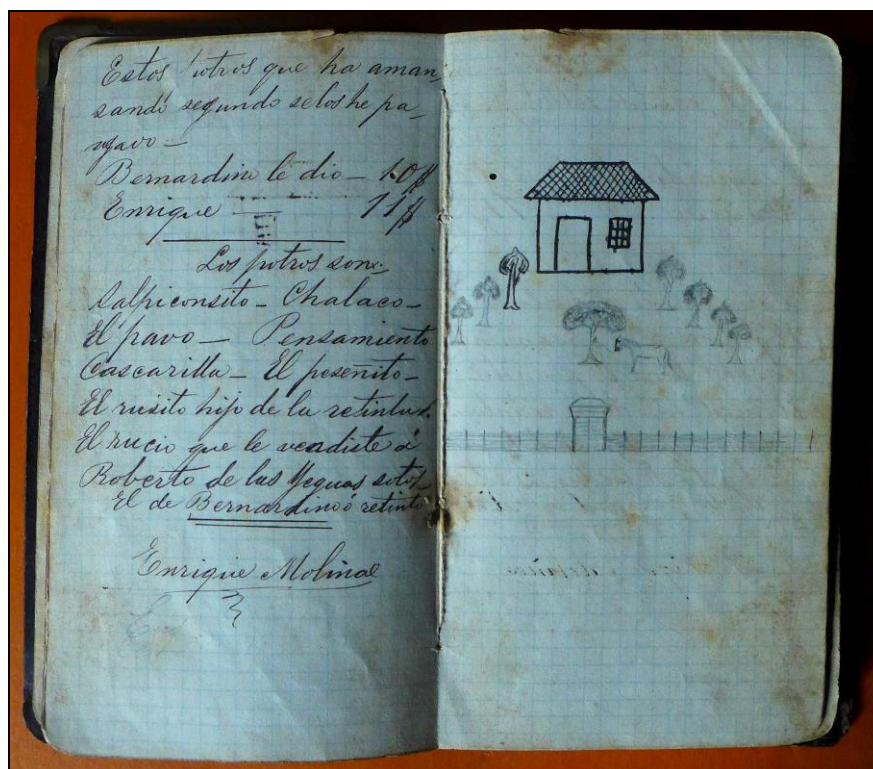


Figure 2.5: Drawing in Enrique Molina's notebook, 1880.<sup>106</sup>

Month	Year	Lot	Mares	Foals	Horses	Mules	Donkeys	Cattle	Total
May	1878	general	300	65		24			389
October	1879	general	275	130	23	54	8		490
June	1882	El Albión	125	28	21	34	4		212
September	1886	general	217	35	21	41		296	610
Average	1878-86		229	64	22	38	6	296	425

<sup>106</sup> Notebook by Enrique Molina, 1876 – 1887, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

Table 2.7: Livestock accounts in Enrique Molina's notebook, 1878 – 1886.<sup>107</sup>

Enrique Molina focused his activities on cattle ranching, but particularly dedicated himself to the breeding of horses and mules for sale and rent. The demand for animal traction was constant in the Cauca Valley and growing in parallel with agrarian activity. These livestock worked inside the estates, either as plow animals, sources of energy for sugar mills (Figure 2.6), or as transport. Other herds moved through the complex geography outside the valley. The market for pack animals demanded high-quality mules that could withstand rough trails characterized by swamps, dense forests and steep cliffs. For this reason mule prices could vary from 16 to 40 pesos.<sup>108</sup> Table 2.7 reconstructs some of the livestock counts in Enrique Molina's notebook, revealing his main interest in service animals, of which he managed averages of 286 horses, 83 foals and 43 mules. Additionally, the notebook registers the presence of 3,683 trees of cocoa in 1880.



Figure 2.6: *Trapiche* for sugar, drawing by De Riou.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Notebook by Enrique Molina, 1876 – 1887, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>108</sup> José María Molina, will date August 1, 1863, box 77, AHB, Buga, Colombia.

<sup>109</sup> Edouard de Riou, *Trapiche de azúcar*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, T.II, 110.



Figure 2.7: Seller of sugarcane, drawing by Neuville.<sup>110</sup>

When Bernardino fell into a serious illness in 1892, both brothers agreed to redistribute the lands of La Concepción in order to balance the inheritance for the next generation. Bernardino, the holder of the biggest share of the estate, only had one daughter to inherit, while Enrique, with a smaller portion of land, supported three sons and two daughters. In consequence, Enrique took over the southern portion, where the main house of the hacienda was located, and the northern side or El Albion passed to Bernardino's estate.<sup>111</sup> By exchanging the land rights, the Molina brothers sought to preserve the integrity of their heritage for the future, aware of the dynamics of the land market in the region and the common rupture of landed estates after the death of family patriarchs.

Bernardino died in 1893. In the following years Enrique looked over the operation of El Albion, as he had done before the land transfer. Due to some issues in the legal procedure and

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<sup>110</sup> Alfred-Arthur Brunel de Neuville, *Vendedor de caña*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, T.I, 126.

<sup>111</sup> Contract for land división between Bernardino Molina and Enrique Molina, January 27, 1892, Palmira, box 1, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

the resignation of the steward in charge, Enrique had to collect the data of production, labor, and inventory of El Albion for the year of 1894. The inventory (Table 2.8) displays an estate of 548 hectares intensively used for 1,034 head of livestock, 68% cattle and 32% service animals, grazing in “natural” and “artificial” pastures, also with a considerable portion of 20 *suertes* of sugarcane to be processed in a properly equipped *trapiche*.<sup>112</sup> The worker’s records reveal a wage labor system for the ranch workers, with an average wage of 3.2 pesos. The eleven *trapiche* workers earned a range of wages: *corteros* (cane harvesters) 4.8 pesos, transporters 2 pesos, grinders 4.4 pesos, and *mielero* (who mixes the molasses to crystallization) 7.5.<sup>113</sup> Unique in this case, wage labor varied among cattle ranch hands and sugar producers, whose specialized skills were better paid, especially in the case of the *mielero*.

Item	Quantity	Price
Lands	548 (ha)	\$10,236
Artificial grass	-	\$4,800
Guaduales (bamboo)	-	\$1,000
Acequia	-	\$400
Fences	-	\$600
House	-	\$2,900
Trapiche (equiped)	-	\$3,800
Sugarcane	20 (suertes)	\$2,000
Oxen	700	\$13,000
Mares	250	\$5,000
Foals	30	\$1,200
Mules	30	\$1,200
Horses	21	\$1,190
Donkeys	3	\$300
		\$47,626

Table 2.8. Inventory of El Albion in the hacienda La Concepción, 1894.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Account report of hacienda El Albion by Enrique Molina, January 27, 1894, Palmira, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>113</sup> Accounts of hacienda El Albion by Enrique Molina, 1894, Palmira, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>114</sup> Account report of hacienda El Albion by Enrique Molina, January 27, 1894, Palmira, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

Enrique Molina died in 1897 and the hacienda remained under the management of his widow and sons; livestock production endured throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to their father's example, Enrique's sons maintained the land tradition in La Concepción, while their sisters found better opportunities in the cities. This new generation introduced milk cows to the farm, a business that began to thrive in the valley by the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the case of La Concepción replaced sugar. Such substitution materialized in the transformation of the hundred-year-old *tropiche* building into a milking facility.<sup>115</sup> For generations, the Molinas' attachment to the land allowed them to adapt their manorial hacienda to modern production conditions. During that time La Concepción did not change land use patterns drastically.<sup>116</sup>

### **2.2.2 La Torre: a place of land fragmentation**

Across the river from La Concepción and downstream, where the Amaime flows into the Cauca, were other traditional haciendas that followed a very different trajectory. The La Torre region was a crossroad between Buga and Palmira, where the wetlands and forests surrounding the big River became narrower, easing the passage of people, goods, and animals to the western side of the Cauca. This geographical condition attracted the attention of various people who settled and invested, making the location an epicenter of the land market in the basin of the Amaime River. Unlike La Concepción, La Torre was the scene of a busy land market, whose dynamics allowed social diversification and the development over time of ecological behaviors divergent from the rest of the region.

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<sup>115</sup> Succession trail of Enrique Molina's assets by Julio Pizarro, October 10, 1922, Palmira, box 2, PAMF, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>116</sup> By mid-20th century, this model of hacienda had not survived the transition towards sugarcane monoculture, when land prices rouse and most of the Molina heirs decided to sell or rent the land to the Providencia sugar factory. All except Felipe Molina, who still preserves the historical documents of his ancestors and the architectural heritage of La Concepción surrounded by sugar cane fields.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a demographic wave from diverse ancestries spread across Colombia's mountain ranges and valleys. While in the northern part of the Central and Western Andes countless peasant families carried out the settlement movement known as "Antioqueño colonization", in the Cauca River Valley demographic growth was related to the freed slave communities previously tied to manorial haciendas. The first formations of *caseríos* (hamlets) by freed slaves and *mestizos* in unoccupied lands of the valley happened in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of spontaneous settlements and leases from bigger estates.<sup>117</sup> However, with the abolition of slavery in 1851 the number of settlers rose steeply. According to figures provided by historian Almarío García, the valley's population increased from 92,901 in 1843 to 169,385 in 1870, and around 200,000 in 1898.<sup>118</sup>

Inevitably, that population boom exerted pressure on landed estates, created escalating inequality in the access to productive land, and triggered a conflict over land use. Although limited in comparison to other regions, where colonization expanded into empty spaces or natural frontiers, such as Antioquia's rugged mountains, the Caribbean's Savanna or the Amazonian foothills, in the Cauca Valley the expansion of the agrarian border pushed into the interior, to wetlands, hills and crossroads.<sup>119</sup> Such demographic motion motivated the foundation of municipalities in former settlement areas or in lands donated by hacendados, with the aim to urbanize and contain communities, preventing their dispersal across estates.<sup>120</sup> Ecologically, these dynamics meant a constant and unequal competition between diversified agricultural systems for subsistence and small cash crops, and the extensive pastures of

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<sup>117</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 16; Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 67.

<sup>118</sup> Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 60.

<sup>119</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 123.

<sup>120</sup> For Mejía Parado, the formation of municipalities came from the colonial claims of towns and villages to get upgraded to cities. The Cauca River Valley counted on the support of local authorities and some haciendas. For Almarío, it was a strategy of hacendados to grant land to the formation of towns in order to prevent the free movement of landed families invading their private property. Mejía Parado, 118; Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 67.



manorial haciendas, such as La Concepción or La Manuelita. On the former estate of Llanogrande, Palmira was established on the eastern side of the Cauca in 1824, followed by Candelaria, El Cerrito and Florida in 1864, Pradera in 1870, and Miranda in 1899 (Figure 2.2).<sup>121</sup>

Figure 2.8 presents the aggregated population totals within the cantons of Buga, Palmira, and Cali at three time points in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, revealing the sharp growth of Palmira in relation to Cali and Buga. Figure 2.9 shows the disaggregated population totals for the cantonal heads (dark colors) and selected townships within them (light colors), Cerrito in Buga, Candelaria in Palmira and Jamundí in Cali. Surprisingly, in 1870 Cali's urban population exceeded Palmira's by only 353 inhabitants, and in the calculations of the geographer Javier Vergara y Velasco in 1890, Palmira even surpassed Cali for a short period. Yet the canton of Palmira showed most of population growth in the region, scattered among the townships of Candelaria, Florida and Pradera. According to Saffray, in 1861 Palmira was "a city entirely new, but already important, whose sudden prosperity is due to the large crops of tobacco established in the area."<sup>122</sup> For his part, Von Schenk commented in 1881: "Palmira in 1860 was a small town, but today has a bustling energy which has surpassed that of the formerly more important Cali, which seems to have decayed considerably."<sup>123</sup> A symbol of a new geopolitical order in the region and a novel economic culture based on tobacco, the city of Palmira functioned as a magnet for internal migration in the valley throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>121</sup> Pedro Antonio Banderas, *Diccionario Geográfico, Industrial y Agrícola Del Valle Del Cauca* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Banderas, 1944).

<sup>122</sup> Charles Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada* [1869], trans. Ricardo Pardo (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1948), 224.

<sup>123</sup> Friedrich Von Schenk, *Viaje Por Antioquia En 1880* [1883], trans. Ernesto Guhl (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1953), 44.

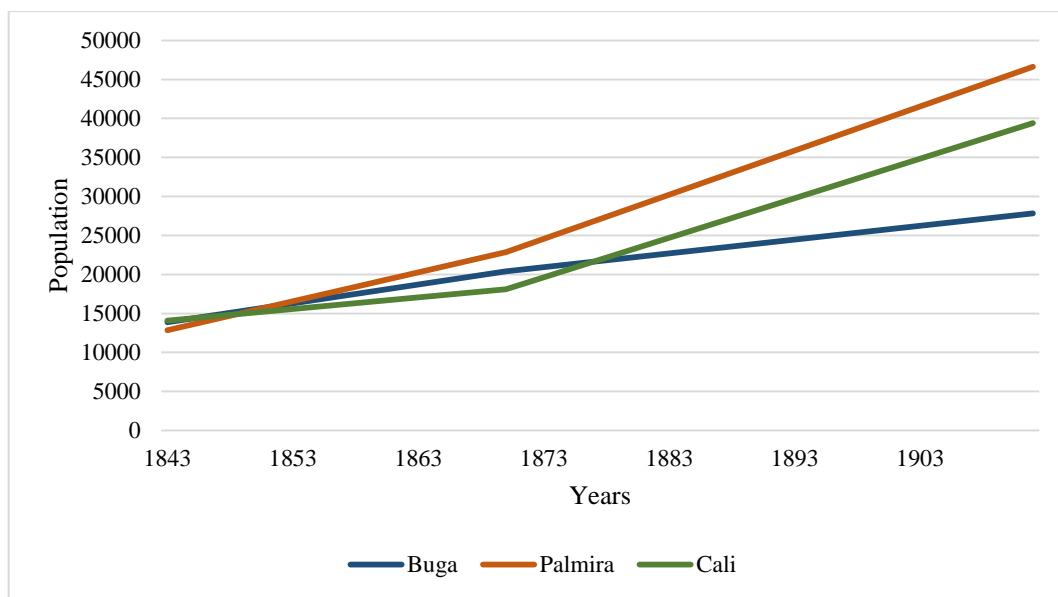


Figure 2.8: Population totals aggregated by cantons of Buga, Palmira and Cali between 1843 and 1912.<sup>124</sup>

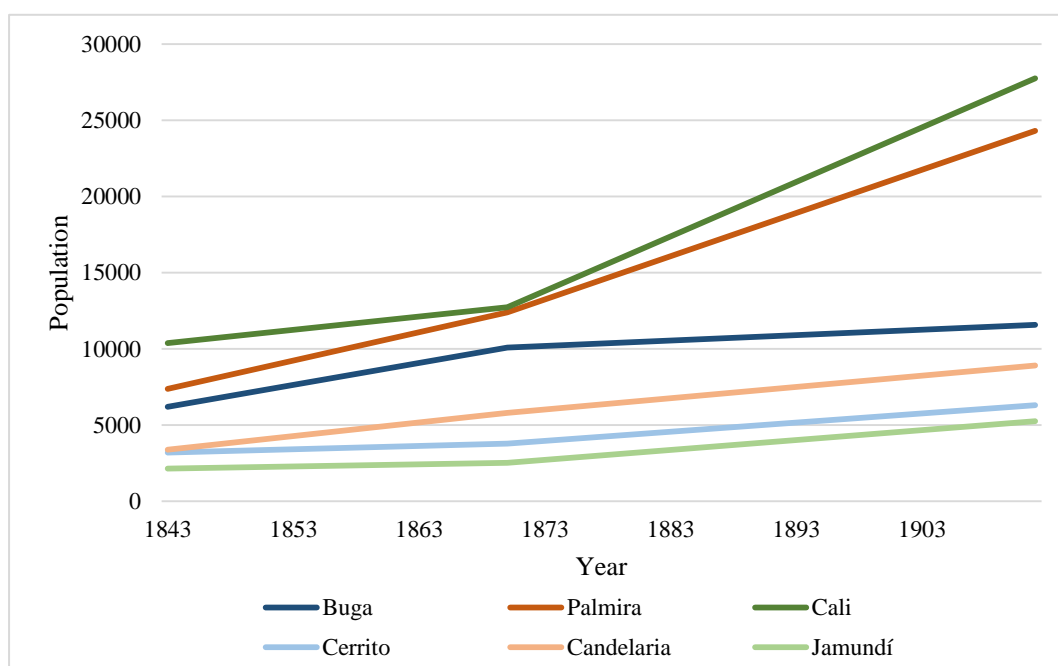


Figure 2.9: Population totals by selected townships within the cantons of Buga, Palmira and Cali between 1843 and 1912.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 120–21, 125–26; Luis Valdivia Rojas, “Mapas de densidad de población para el suroccidente 1843-1870,” 108, 109; Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, “Censo General de La República de Colombia,” 49.

<sup>125</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 120–21, 125–26; Luis Valdivia Rojas, “Mapas de densidad de población para el suroccidente 1843-1870,” 108, 109; Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, “Censo General de La República de Colombia,” 49.



However, the urbanization behind this demographic wave allowed the inequality of land distribution to continue, except in particular cases such as La Torre (Figure 2.8). While new elites consolidated alongside the migrations, landed estates retained and even increased their territory through purchase and lease. Small and middle sized properties disseminated on the lands of former haciendas and small hamlets sprouted around the crossroads. They often were areas of uncertain ownership, legal blind spots suitable for landless peasant settlement that offered perfect locations to grow small cash crops and set up informal commercial operations.<sup>126</sup> In La Torre, this was a slow process that began in parallel to the atomization of a manorial hacienda.

The lands of La Torre were once part of the huge estate of Llanogrande, owned by the Cobo family. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, after the first land divisions, the section of La Torre in the north-western corner of the estate ended up in hands of Carmen Cobo and her husband, José Vasquez Cordoba, residents of Cali. Vasquez Cordoba's death in December 1891 triggered a systematic dissolution of their landed estate. From about the 1880s, few transactions in the notarial offices in Cali were signed by individuals with distinguished last names among those lands located in La Torre. In 1875, Joaquin de Caicedo y Caicedo sold 576 hectares in the southern part of La Torre to José María Tejada for 9,000 pesos, and in 1880 other lands to General Tomas Rengifo for 16,000 pesos.<sup>127</sup> Caicedo's properties were located on the southern part of La Torre. However, after 1891 the transactions multiplied in number and diversified in scale and type of owner.

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<sup>126</sup> Luis Valdivia Rojas, *Economía y Espacio: El Valle Del Cauca 1850 a 1950* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1992); Almario García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 61.

<sup>127</sup> Land purchase contract between Joaquin Caicedo to Tomas Rengifo, 1880, AHC, Second Notary, T.41, Cali, Colombia; Land purchase contract between Julio Vicente Rengifo to Tomas Rengifo, 1880, AHC, Second Notary, T.41, Cali, Colombia; Land purchase contract between Aquilino Aparicio to Primitivo Valencia, 1889, AHC, First Notary, T.45, Cali, Colombia.

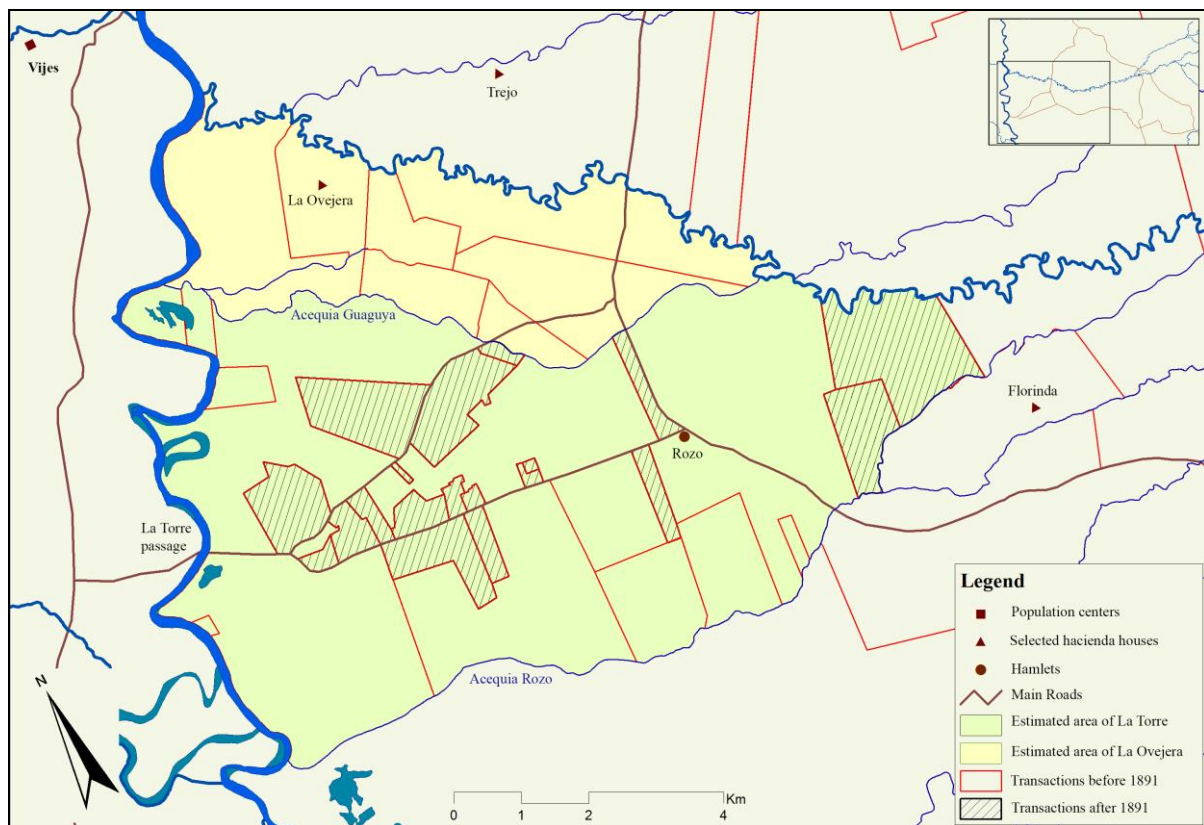


Figure 2.10: Spatial location of the area of La Torre in the basin of the Amaime River showing land transaction before and after 1891.

Figure 2.10 displays the land distribution in La Torre at the end of the century based on the transactions recorded by the notaries of Cali.<sup>128</sup> In the north-western corner of the area was a small hacienda named La Ovejera (yellow on the map), in between the Amaime and the *acequia* Guaguya, which was subdivided into seven sections in a map from 1883.<sup>129</sup> La Torre (green on the map) comprised the lands between the *acequias* Guaguya and Rozo from north to south and between the Cauca River and the limits of Hacienda Real from west to east. The striped polygons represent properties purchased from the descendants of the Vasquez Cobo family after 1891. Except for the two largest portions on the center-west and

<sup>128</sup> As the Vasquez Cobo family resided in the city of Cali, most of their land transactions were carried on in the notaries of this city. However, the scrutiny of the notary of Palmira, of difficult to access, remains as a future task to complete this Geographical Information System.

<sup>129</sup> Liborio Vergara, *Plano de la Antigua hacienda la Ovejera*, 1883, escritura 191, notaria segunda, AHC, Cali, Colombia. Unique in the Historical Archive of Cali, this map is the result of a survey for the division of the hacienda. Similar procedures were made for Hacienda Real and La Torre, but the maps are not available in the archives.

extreme eastern sides of the estate, the rest of the lots barely surpassed 120 hectares each, valued at an average of 47 pesos per hectare. The buyers did not have prestigious last names, and most of them came from different towns (when this information is provided); 10 resided in Palmira, 5 in Cali, 4 in Yumbo, and 2 in Vijes.

The partial information about land use in these deeds reveals a preeminence of pasture for livestock. Twelve of the transactions included guinea and para grasses in the appraisal of the lands, while only one referred to the presence of cocoa trees, plantain, and maize.<sup>130</sup> It is very likely that by the 1890s slave descendant families without access to land had already established a hamlet in nearby Rozo.<sup>131</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>, century La Torre's fragmentation had begun, slowly providing landless communities with access to productive land in a strategic location for agriculture and commerce. This process continued during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until the formation of the *corregimiento* (a subdivision of a municipality) of Rozo, a patch of diversified farming within the otherwise predominant of sugarcane.

On a smaller scale, the case of Rozo represents events to the south of Palmira that led to the formation of towns such as Candelaria, Florida, and Pradera (Figure 2.2).<sup>132</sup> The dynamic of agglomeration of families in spaces at the margins of haciendas and near transport axes was followed by the legalization of land rights, either by purchase or by donation by hacendados. This process allowed freed slave communities and peasant settlers from other regions to participate in the configuration of the Cauca River Valley's agricultural landscape. Even if tenant relationships between peasants and landowners continued across the region,

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<sup>130</sup> Land purchase contract between Primitivo Orejuela to Rafael Antonio Sánchez, 1896, AHC, Second Notary, T.75, Cali, Colombia.

<sup>131</sup> Crist, *The Cauca Valley, Colombia*, 28.

<sup>132</sup> In fact, today there is a movement to make Rozo the 43<sup>rd</sup> municipality of the Cauca Valley, separating its habitants from Palmira and its taxes designated for the agro-industry.

these new dynamics provided access to land in a communal manner, in the particular context of demographic pressure, social struggle, and political resistance.<sup>133</sup> Their ecological relationship with land differed from hacendados and entrepreneurs in the way these communities understood the purpose of the valley's rich lands. In limited space, peasant communities managed to farm subsistence crops such as plantain, yucca, maize, and fruits, raise a little livestock for work and self-consumption, and establish the production of small cash crops (especially tobacco) to trade in local markets. Their first priority was to sustain their rising demographic numbers, in a context of marked social and ecological inequality.<sup>134</sup> In some cases this inequality was the cause of violent encounters between communities and the powerful hacendados, as happened in the southern part of the valley and the mountains of nearby Popayan throughout the twentieth century.<sup>135</sup>

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Through opposite trajectories, the two sections of the basin of the Amaime River illustrate wider processes that took place throughout the Cauca River Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were two opposite outcomes of the system of the manorial hacienda in its pass through the political reformism and social diversification of 19<sup>th</sup> century Colombia. If the land tenure patterns behind the two cases did not evidence early substantial changes in the use of land, over time, diverging forms of social organization and their unequal access to natural resources resulted in quite different ecological behaviors. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these two ways of understanding the purpose of the valley's lands struggled both for and against an emerging agricultural modernization that eventually led towards the drastic environmental

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<sup>133</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 140.

<sup>134</sup> To understand thoroughly the socio-ecological dimension of peasant, Indigenous and Afro Colombian settlements in the Cauca River Valley, further research is needed. Beginning with a scrutiny of historical sources, both written and oral, capable of giving light to the silences of the dispossessed in the history of this landscape, and tracing the diachronic links with today's struggles and necessities.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

transformation of this landscape. The expansion of sugarcane monoculture in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century steadily replaced livestock as the dominant land use across the flatlands, while peasant, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian lands remained marginalized, as they became the wage labor force of agroindustry.

Crist's analysis in the 1950s of the relationship between a land tenure structure and land use dynamics in the valley was not wrong; the system of manorial haciendas restricted this agricultural landscape to extensive cattle ranching. However, the manorial hacienda he portrayed was far from a static institution exclusively driven by a *prestige tenure* logic. Even the most traditional haciendas had to change their productive dynamics to survive the historical changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They had to find new ways to relate with land and nature, from absentee ownership to active management of the haciendas. Living as ranchers and farmers, prestige was no longer the final goal for hacendados. However, the role of other newcomers to the valley involved in wider historical processes would be decisive for the outcome of this environmental history, especially foreign liberal entrepreneurs. In the Cauca Valley, a pioneer of this type of agricultural logic was Santiago Eder, whose project in the valley brought the consolidation of agricultural industrialization at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “The master’s eye fattens the cow”

To express the importance of his surveillance over the agricultural activities in his haciendas, Santiago Eder often said: “The master’s eye fattens the cow”.<sup>1</sup> Despite his role of capitalist, constantly involved in several business activities in line with the pace of change in the international market, Eder upheld a rural life and maintained a close eye on the internal matters of his haciendas in the Cauca River Valley. Through this dual profile of local *hacendado* and cosmopolitan businessman, Eder oversaw a particular agricultural project characterized by an understanding of the environmental and social conditions of this landscape and a persistent assessment of the internal and external economic dynamics over time. Such was Eder’s “liberal hacienda”, a unit of agricultural production molded by a transnational context, which established a standard of social appropriation and transformation of nature that would be decisive in Cauca River Valley’s agricultural and environmental history.

The liberal hacienda emerged from the encounter of two worlds. On one side, it was motivated by prospects opened by the rise of a novel economic system that, based on the faith in private enterprise and the free market, found in the Pacific coastline the highway for an inter-oceanic trade network. Engaged in this economic framework, Latin American governments followed a liberal doctrine that aimed to reform colonial structures and increase the revenues of their troubled economies. In Colombia’s case, the liberal spirit resulted in the constitution of 1863. The increasing international demand for tropical commodities opened

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<sup>1</sup> Phanor James Eder, *El fundador Santiago M. Eder: recuerdos de su vida y acotaciones para la historia económica del Valle del Cauca* (Bogotá: Flota Mercante Grancolombiana, 1981), 481. Phanor James was Santiago’s son. He was a lawyer and writer, famous for two books, one about Colombian history published in 1913, and this biography of his father, first published in 1939. “EL Fundador” will serve as a guide throughout the chapter for its thoroughness and detail, yet a critical reading retains a distance from its apologetic statements.

doors for foreign investments, such as Eder's agricultural enterprise in the Hacienda La Manuelita. On the other side, such enterprises stood upon the ground of a local agrarian structure that, despite the recent winds of economic change, was still ruled by the cultural model of the manorial hacienda. The liberal hacienda was still a hacienda, ruled by a dominant owner and worked with dependent labor, but it relied upon varied investments of capital, and its production addressed both internal and external markets.

### **3.1 Owning land and adaptation to the social context**

Santiago Eder was born in 1838 in Mitau, capital of the duchy of Courland in the Russian Empire (today Jelgava, Latvia).<sup>2</sup> At age twelve, he followed the path of his four older brothers, who joined the massive flow of European immigrants in search of opportunities in the New World. The elder, Henry, arrived in the United States in the 1830s, where he found promising business opportunities in the emerging Pacific trade network, especially after California's gold rush, which he joined in 1849.<sup>3</sup> While Henry settled his business headquarters in Panama City, Phanor Eder established a commercial house in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in which his brother David Eder worked for a while before moving to London. One by one, the Eder brothers sailed to America and spread across the continental Pacific coast, establishing trading offices and forging a business network. Santiago's brothers were his anchor in America. They not only opened the path for him to study, travel and invest, they also advised and financed his risky business quests.

Immediately after arriving in New York in 1851, Santiago Eder began his studies under the sponsorship of his brother Henry and moved between New York, San Francisco and Sacramento. After graduating in 1858, Eder enrolled in Law School at Harvard, where he

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<sup>2</sup> Although his birth name was James Martin Eder, he changed to Santiago Eder after moving to Latin America. This text will use the name of Santiago.

<sup>3</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 19–64.

earned his degree the following year. He returned to California to join his brother and acquire some experience as an attorney, particularly in commerce focused on the Pacific network.<sup>4</sup> As he turned 22, Eder had the world at his feet, with a prestigious legal title and the support of his successful brothers. Such an intense and privileged adolescence of studying and traveling motivated him to venture into that vast and accessible universe of the Americas' Pacific shores.

In 1860 Eder bought a one-way ticket for a three-month sailboat trip to Chile, an adventure that would reveal to him the endless opportunities of this region.<sup>5</sup> On the way back, he decided to stay in Panama, working for a firm associated with his brother Henry as an accountant and commissioner. As one of his duties, Eder travelled to collect some credits from a commercial house in Buenaventura, Colombia's main port on the Pacific, where he decided to stay. In 1861, he opened an office there engaged in trade commissions and imports of European wine and goods.<sup>6</sup>

Established in 1826, Buenaventura was Colombia's hope to consolidate its Pacific market in connection with the Panama Isthmus. The port was barely a city. With few solid buildings, Buenaventura was composed of wooden elevated houses adapted to the extreme ups and downs of the ocean's tide. Eder acquired one of these houses as the first property of his trading enterprise. From there, he exported various kinds of commodities either purchased or produced on his estates, while importing goods and machinery throughout his career. The seaport was at the mouth of the Dagua River, on a hostile shore with an extremely humid climate. Plagued by a diversity of tropical diseases, its only connection with the inland

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<sup>4</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 65–90.

<sup>5</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the southern country was a dominant economic and political force in Americas' Pacific, due to its wealthy exports of saltpeter and guano to England, and the influence of Chilean mining expertise in California's gold boom. Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 71.



mountains was by a dangerous canoe trip upstream across the rapids of the Dagua. Then a bridle path crossed the rugged Western Andes Mountains to reach the city of Cali on the Cauca River Valley. Eventually Eder made this trip and arrived in the valley where he would settle for the rest of his life.<sup>7</sup>

In 1864, at age 26, Eder arrived in the Cauca River Valley, where he changed his name to Santiago. According to a consular report of 1868, the Cauca State was “excellent for all agricultural purposes and produces all kind of fruits of the tropical and template zones, it abounds in gold, silver, copper, iron and coal mines, but very little of it is worked.” Within the *Gran Cauca*, Eder identified the Cauca Valley as “the most inhabited and important of the State, is very healthy and has at the same time a very capeable (sic) climate.” He continued, there were “no roads, excepting mule trails are to be met within the whole country, and they are in the rainy season so bad that communication is almost stopped through the country.”<sup>8</sup> The conclusion of this report manifests Eder’s motivations in the Cauca River Valley like no other source written by his hand:

“This rich and fertile country, which can boast of so many natural advantages, unfortunately is constantly in revolutions like all the other parts of New Granada, and appears to go backwards every year. Most of the land owners and better class of the people see but one hope for their country, and that is American emigration.”<sup>9</sup>

When Eder arrived in the valley, barely a year had passed after the establishment of the 1863 constitution, and the liberal spirit was in its bloom. Once there, he made what would be the most important transaction of his life: to purchase the haciendas La Manuelita, La Rita, and Oriente, within the boundaries of former large estate Hacienda Real in Palmira. In 1864 Santiago Eder was on a business visit to Cali, where he met Pío Rengifo, the godfather of

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<sup>7</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 88.

<sup>8</sup> James M. Eder to William H. Seward, October 24, 1868, box 9, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Eder to William H. Seward, October 24, 1868, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

Jorge Isaacs (son). The time coincided with the public auction of the Isaacs' properties, due to the gambling debts of Jorge Enrique (father) mentioned in the previous chapter. Seizing the opportunity, Eder and Rengifo bid high enough to purchase the famous hacienda La Manuelita without any counteroffer.<sup>10</sup>

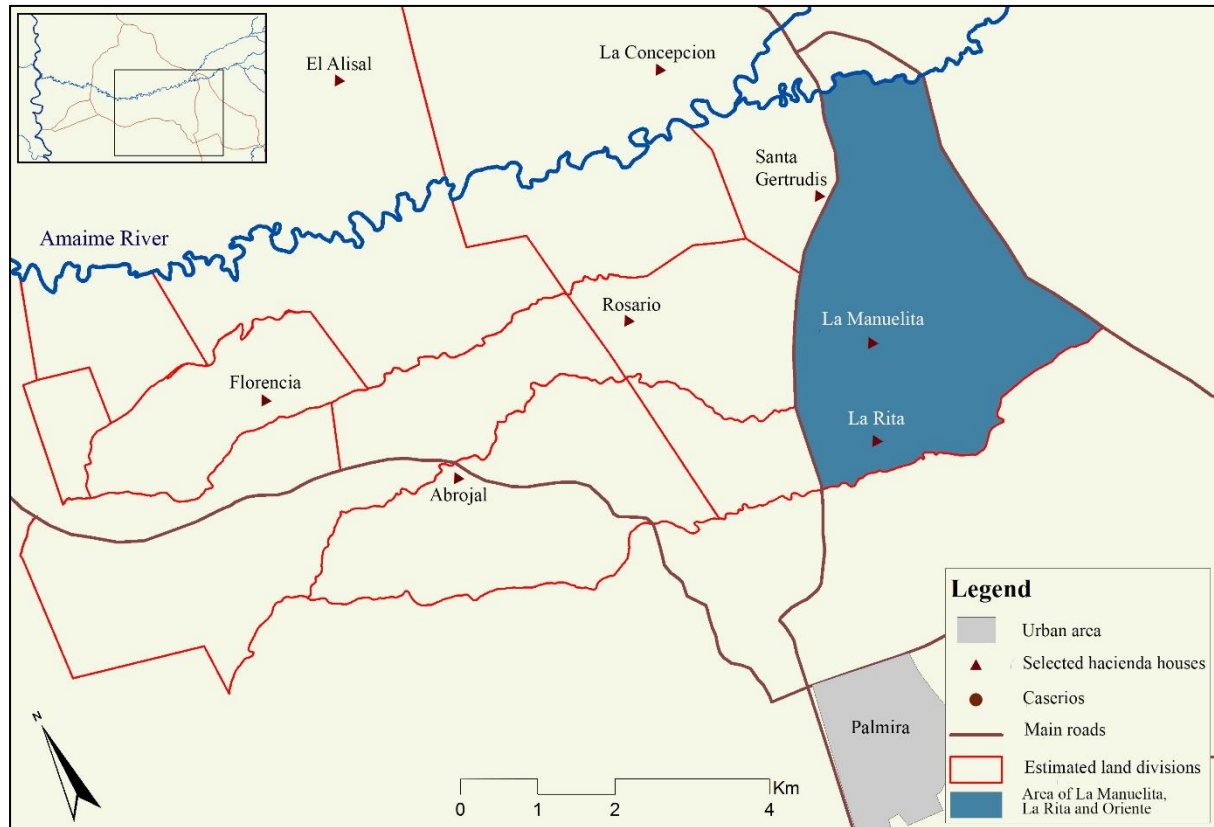


Figure 3.1: Spatial location of the haciendas La Manuelita, La Rita and Oriente, 1867.

On April 20 of 1864, Eder and Rengifo paid 34,000 pesos for the joined haciendas of La Manuelita and La Rita. Together, the estates covered an estimated 1,000 hectares of productive land entirely in flat terrain, with two almost new houses, a working *trapiche* (sugar mill), and privileged access to water ditches and main roads (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado and Armando Moncayo Urrutia, “La Transición de Hacienda a Ingenio Azucarero Industrializado En El Valle Geográfico Del Río Cauca, 1850-1925” (Tesis de Licenciatura, Departamento de Historia, Universidad del Valle, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> The estimated area was calculated based on the boundaries description provided by a mortgage of 1868. Mortgage of Santiago Eder's properties, January 19, 1868, Palmira, box 8, folder 14, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

According to the notarial data gathered in Cali and Palmira, this was the largest land transaction of the 1860s and 1870s on the eastern side of the Cauca River.<sup>12</sup> Because of the singularity of this deal, there is no detailed account of the hacienda's assets at the time of the transaction. However, five months later Eder purchased the contiguous but smaller estate of Oriente, whose legal appraisal provides a picture of the material constitution of these haciendas around 1864.

Donated by Jorge Enrique Isaacs to his son in law José María Iragorri in 1858, the hacienda Oriente comprised about 215 hectares just east of La Manuelita. Valued at 6,133 pesos, its assets included: 2 houses and furniture, 80 portions of guinea and para grass, 50 head of cattle, 3 service horses, 4 hogs, 16 bamboo bushes, 4 portions of plantain, 1 maize crop, half a hectare of sugarcane, fruit trees and rights in a water ditch.<sup>13</sup> The inventory reveals Oriente as a small self-sufficient unit with few crops and dedicated to cattle ranching, for which most of the area was suited with artificial grasses valued in 2,400 pesos, 40% of the hacienda's total price. Despite the scarcity of sugarcane and the absence of a sugar mill, Oriente serves as an example of the land use logic in the haciendas of the Isaacs family, a logic common in this part of the valley.

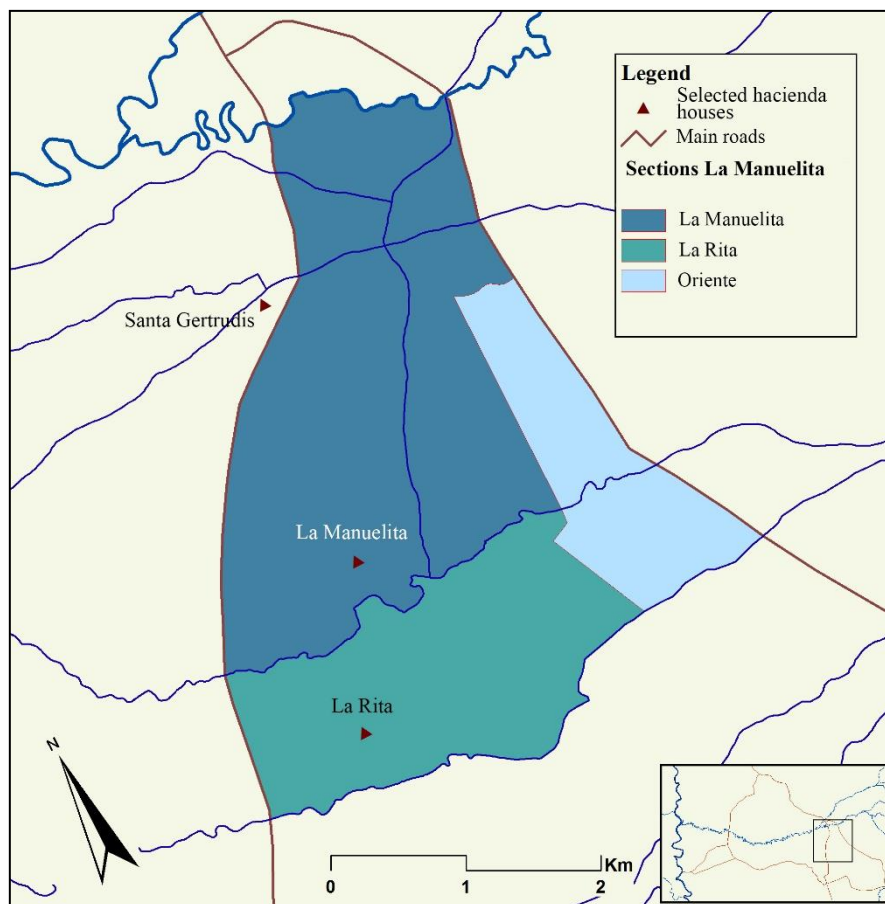
By buying the hacienda Oriente, which he paid for with imported medicines for the establishment of a drugstore in Cali, Eder increased his lands to 1,215 hectares with infrastructure in good condition, subsistence crops, productive sugarcane fields, a mill, and extensive pasture lands planted with imported grasses. Owning the land was the first step for

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<sup>12</sup> In some opinions, the price paid was excessive for the conditions of the property. Although, the general lack of area data in the land transactions of that time impede the calculation of an average price per hectare, Phanor Eder references later comments of his father and friends about the excessive price paid for the haciendas. Phanor describe the original conditions of the estates as "mainly virgin jungles" and the Isaacs' as inefficient land owners in order to enhance the narrative of his father's heroic achievements. Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Land purchase contract between José María Iragorri and Santiago Eder, October 7, 1864, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

Eder's agricultural plans. That was possible thanks to shared expenses with Rengifo and credit obtained through his agents in New York who had financed the drugs used to pay for Oriente.<sup>14</sup> It was a risky entrepreneurship justified only by the potential he saw in the Cauca River Valley and in opportunities in the Pacific market. Immediately after acquiring the haciendas, Eder and Rengifo traveled to Panama, where they ordered from New York a shipment of cutting edge machinery to upgrade the sugar mill. These included a bronze still and a rectifier to distill *aguardiente* (liquor), three horizontal iron feeding rollers to move the cane, and a Pelton Wheel to improve the hydraulic power in the sugar mill.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, they bought a house in the central square of Palmira.



<sup>14</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 103.

<sup>15</sup> Eder, 104; CENICAÑA, "Historic Dates of the Sugar Agroindustry in Colombia," <http://www.cenicana.org>, accessed July 19, 2017, [http://www.cenicana.org/quienes\\_somos/agroindustria/historia\\_eng.php](http://www.cenicana.org/quienes_somos/agroindustria/historia_eng.php).

Figure 3.2: Areas of the haciendas La Manuelita, La Rita and Oriente, 1867.

Since the beginning, Eder applied a corporate model of finance and management of the haciendas, something unusual in Cauca Valley's mid-19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural context, but with some parallel examples in thriving regions such as Antioquia and Cundinamarca.<sup>16</sup> The spirit of this entrepreneurship was revealed in the contracts signed between Eder and Rengifo in October 1865 and January 1866, through which they made official the establishment of an agricultural enterprise in the haciendas La Rita, La Manuelita, and Oriente. In the first document, both associates clarified the partition of 34,000 pesos in investments at the auction for Isaacs's estates, and the sum of later investments in the hacienda Oriente, the house in Palmira, imported machinery, contracting of services and transport animals for a total of 25,586 pesos.<sup>17</sup> The second document was meant to protect the company from the impact of any eventual social and political disturbances in the country. In such cases Eder, as a foreign citizen, would be able to intervene and bargain with the government to protect the enterprise's lands and assets.<sup>18</sup>

Aware of the advantages of being a foreign citizen within such a stratified society as Colombia, Santiago Eder rapidly created for himself a social prestige among the local elites, and part of this prestige relied upon the ownership of a large landed estate. However, in his corporate logic, the power of land was not only conducive for social and political interests; properties mainly served as collateral for further financial movements. Through recurrent

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<sup>16</sup> These regions became the focus of Colombian and foreign agricultural entrepreneurs. Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of Colombian agricultural production came from Cundinamarca's foothills in the Magdalena River valley, while most miners, ranchers and merchants settled their business headquarters in Antioquia. Examples will be addressed throughout the chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Contract between Santiago Eder and Pio Rengifo, January 25, 1867, Cali, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL. Among the services in this account appears the contract of German engineer Enrique Hauesler, who was well known in Antioquia for his technical support on a variety of infrastructure works, particularly for land and river transportation. Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> Contract between Santiago Eder and Pio Rengifo, January 25, 1867, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

mortgages, Eder capitalized on his lands to support investments in different business, such as agriculture, commerce, mining, and transport infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Maintaining his reputation as a reliable creditor was essential for Eder's entrepreneurship and for the development of his agricultural activity. However, he lacked an important condition to properly fit into traditional rural society: a family. In 1867, Eder sailed to the United States and Europe with several objectives, one of which was to find a wife.

While visiting his brother David in London at the beginning of 1867, Santiago met Elizabeth Benjamin, who he married five weeks later. Soon after the wedding, the couple returned to Colombia with all of her possessions, including furniture, a carriage, and a piano. Once in Palmira, they formalized the marital contract before the notary through a bargain in which Santiago converted the haciendas to Elizabeth's co-ownership.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of a family aided Santiago's aspirations to thrive among the manorial culture of the Cauca River Valley. Elizabeth Eder performed not just as a wife and mother, but she became manager of the internal affairs of the haciendas and a linkage with neighboring hacendados. A cross correspondence between Elizabeth and Fidela Martínez, wife of Carlos Martínez, owner of the Hacienda El Alisal, on the other side of the Amaime River, reveals the importance of these domestic relations, particularly to guarantee a partnership in the movement of livestock across the river.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mortgage of Santiago Eder's properties, January 19, 1868, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Contract between Santiago Eder and Antonio Marique, October 16, 1872, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL. Contract between Santiago Eder and Rafael González, August 9, 1878, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL. Contract of constitution of the Steam Navigation Company on the Cauca River, March 13, 1883, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>20</sup> Marriage contract between Santiago Eder and Elizabeth Benjamin, January 19, 1868, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>21</sup> Carlos Martínez to Santiago Eder, February 13, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Carlos Martínez to Santiago Eder, February 23, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Carlos Martínez to Santiago Eder, August 21, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Carlos Martínez to Santiago Eder, January 20, 1874, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Carlos Martínez to Santiago Eder, February 4, 1874, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

While his varied agricultural business thrived, Eder gradually increased his lands in different parts of the valley. In the 1870s, his investments focused on diverse agricultural projects, some of which involved the associated development of landed estates to farming. Then from the 1880s Eder expanded his land ownership considerably. Through two major land purchases in Buga and Caloto, he consolidated his standing as a mighty landlord, a profile cheered by local elites, but cursed by the communities marginalized by his estates. Despite the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of his economic performance as liberal a adventurer, Eder cultivated a conservative social life as a Caucan landlord.

In the municipality of Buga, Eder bought a portion of the immense hacienda La Paila, from the powerful Caicedo family. German traveler Von Schenk estimated that it was over 135,000 hectares and capable of supporting 15,000 head of cattle.<sup>22</sup> The death of the family patriarch, José María Caicedo y Zorrilla in 1868 prompted the division of his massive hacienda into three parts, one of which was known as El Guavito. In 1883, Santiago Eder bought El Guavito from Belisario Caicedo for 5,000 pesos. As revealed in the land deed, the size of the estate was significant, as its eastern boundary was vaguely demarcated in “the second chain of mountains.”<sup>23</sup> Common in the manorial land tenure system, such ambiguous boundaries triggered constant conflicts with settlers living in the mountain hills who were forced to provide tenant labor on the haciendas. Such conflicts haunted the Hacienda el Guavito for a long time, as mentioned by Phanor Eder without further detail. Under Eder’s domain, the hacienda El Guavito was used exclusively for cattle ranching until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Caicedo family bought it back as part of the expansion of their industrial sugar mill Riopaila.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Von Schenck, *Viaje Por Antioquia En 1880*, trans. Ernesto Guhl (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1953), 41.

<sup>23</sup> Land purchase contract between Belisario Caicedo and Santiago Eder, October 20, 1883, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL

<sup>24</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 444.

On the other side of the Cauca River Valley to the south, was located the hacienda Güengüe in the jurisdiction of Caloto, property of the commercial house A.R. Blum & Brothers since 1874. When the tobacco market crisis pushed the Blums to bankruptcy, Eder acquired the hacienda as partial repayment for a former debt. Consequently, in 1886 Eder became the legal owner of Güengüe and its significant 3,200 hectares, valued in 8,048 pesos.<sup>25</sup> As specified in the land deed, this hacienda was “composed only by lands, construction timber, forests, *guaduales* (bamboo), many other materials, flowing water and possessions farmed by *agregados* (tenants).”<sup>26</sup> The presence of communal settlements was a distinguishing factor of this estate, located between the Indigenous territories of Corinto and Caloto, and the most important African decedent settlements in the valley. Used by Eder for cattle ranching and some sugar cane crops, the hacienda Güengüe was a place of social struggle even after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was taken over by the industrial sugar mill Incauca.<sup>27</sup>

These were the most representative landed estates acquired by Eder in the valley. Several other small transactions were signed in his office throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eder was ambitious to position himself as a proper hacendado, buying, selling and loaning properties throughout the valley. For him, the land was a commodity, which could be transferred and used according to the dynamics of internal and external markets, and yet, lands still provided him the social prestige and credit worthiness to invest in diverse businesses. In his role of hacendado, Eder adapted to the Caucan elite society not just by following their cultural costumes of family and property, but also in reproducing their

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<sup>25</sup> Land assignment contract between Adolf Blum and Maximilian Blum and Santiago Eder, March 30, 1886, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Eder, 448.

<sup>26</sup> Land assignment contract between Adolf Blum and Maximilian Blum and Santiago Eder, March 30, 1886, Palmira, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>27</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado and Armando Moncayo Urrutia, “La Transición de Hacienda a Ingenio Azucarero Industrializado”, 91.



systems of land tenure and labor that fostered and preserved the social inequality in the valley over time.<sup>28</sup>

The labor system in Eder's haciendas and in general on the Cauca River Valley of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century was a product of the abolition of slavery after 1851. Two centuries of slave tradition in Caucan manorial haciendas rooted a culture of work relations that would not easily change, and which carried into the system of wage work throughout the post-abolition era.<sup>29</sup> While the families of blacks and *mestizos* were pushed to marginalized spaces to make their livelihood, such as wetlands, mountain hills, or crossroad areas (Figure 3.3), they also had to compete for wage work on the haciendas. In the manorial dynamics, this work was divided between the two core agricultural activities, sugarcane and cattle rising.



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<sup>28</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado and Armando Moncayo Urrutia, "La Transición de Hacienda a Ingenio Azucarero Industrializado", 104.

<sup>29</sup> Mateo Mina, *Esclavitud y Libertad En El Valle Del Rio Cauca* (Bogota: Publicaciones de la Rosca, 1975) 49.

Figure 3.3: Caserío of workers in the hacienda La Manuelita, 1903.<sup>30</sup>

Sugarcane activities were often related to slave work, including the rough harvesting of the canes made by *corteros* (cutters), and the more specialized *trapiche* duties to process the sugar, molasses and liquor, which required practice and knowledge of the machinery. Due to the dominant livestock culture in the valley, cattle ranching work was better paid and of higher status.<sup>31</sup> Such work was culturally linked to *mestizo* cowboys, “brave, dared and skilled”, in Saffray’s words, but with “a lack of practical ideas and life experience”.<sup>32</sup> Within the manorial hacienda to these work activities had to be added the requirements of new cash crops, such as coffee, indigo and tobacco. Eder had enough labor force at his disposal for these tasks, and weak official regulation and surveillance. Although Eder’s documentation about labor is rare, the development of the enterprise and photographic records (Figure 3.4) reveal that in its adaptation to the manorial structures, the liberal hacienda relied upon a labor system of social, racial and gender inequality. The photograph of 1892 “Blacks harvesting coffee in La Rita” (Figure 3.4) is a unique document portraying labor on Eder’s plantations. The faces of women and children from a slave ancestry blur within the tangle of a foreign plantation introduced by Eder in his pursuit of diverse cash crops for an export-orientated economy. The veiled sections of the photograph serve as a metaphor of the silenced and hidden voices of these actors in the history of Santiago Eder and La Manuelita.

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<sup>30</sup> N.A. *Caserio de trabajadores en la Antigua La Manuelita*, 1903, photograph, fotos, box 83, folder 13, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>31</sup> Almarío García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada* [1869], trans. Ricardo Pardo (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1948), 229.





Figure 3.4: Harvesting coffee in the coffee plantation in La Rita, 1892.<sup>33</sup>

As mentioned in Eder's estates in Buga and Caloto, tenant leases were the most evident dynamics of labor relations between hacendados and landless peasants in the Cauca River Valley. It became the primary way through which landowners managed to grasp free laborers to work on their lands without compromising the boundaries of the haciendas.<sup>34</sup> This phenomenon was also present in the lands of La Manuelita, as is revealed in a letter of 1884 from Basilio Otero, a tenant of the hacienda, to "Don Santiago". Otero expressed gratitude to Eder for leasing him the small paddock of La Primitiva, and reaffirmed the points of the agreement. Otero had one year to improve the land and raise a fence, for which he requested help from one of Eder's laborers, and to build a house, in his words, to "protect the family

<sup>33</sup> N.A. *Cimarrones recogiendo café en la plantación de café de La Rita*, 1892, photograph, fotos, box 83, folder 13, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>34</sup> Eduardo Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano* (Cali: Universidad del Cauca, 1993), 140.

from diseases and to protect everything that belongs to us, and I will make it like my own home.” The lease was set for seven years at an annual rent of 6 pesos, considering possible delays due to plagues and diseases, in which case Otero believed Eder would “help me as my good master, in the same way a laborer takes care of his tool.”<sup>35</sup>

### **3.2 Using the land, from diversification to sketches of monoculture**

The trip to Europe in 1867 allowed Eder to accomplish decisive tasks for his career and for the course of his haciendas. His first stop was in the United States, where he visited Washington to deliver information about gold mining prospects on Colombia’s southern Pacific shores that the Department of State requested from him in advance. That day, Eder was reaffirmed as US consul for Buenaventura, a role he had played since 1866 and that would continue for several years. As a diplomat, Eder watched over the welfare of US citizens in Colombia’s Pacific region, particularly in judicial and commercial matters.<sup>36</sup> From the US, he sailed to London where, besides personal matters, he searched for business partners to invest in his agricultural enterprise. This quest brought him to the offices of the Vogl Brothers, a small merchant firm interested in trading tropical commodities. Together, the Vogls, Santiago, and his brother Henry created that year the “Palmyra Coffee Plantation Company”, with a mission to establish a factory in Eder’s haciendas to farm, export and sell the beans, whose demand exhibited a steady growth in the international market.<sup>37</sup>

#### **3.2.1 Coffee: a consistent trial and error**

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<sup>35</sup> Basilio Otero to Santiago Eder, April 28, 1884, box 4, folder 2, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>36</sup> G.M. Mejía to Santiago Eder, June 20, 1870, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Alfred Hill to Santiago Eder, November 17, 1870, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; W.W. Morse to Santiago Eder, July 29, 1873, box 2, folder 5, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Rafael Peña to Santiago Eder, October 20, 1873, box 3, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>37</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 477.

Farming coffee was the first new agricultural endeavor undertaken by Santiago Eder in his haciendas in the Cauca River Valley. The first investment of the Palmyra Coffee Plantation Company was in top quality machinery for the complex processing of coffee, including a blower to dry the beans and a husking mill and a pulping machine to clean them. For the plantation, Eder employed the lands of the Hacienda La Rita, where he invested capital in construction and adaptation of buildings. According to Phanor Eder, his father learned everything he could about coffee farming, inspired by the enthusiasm awakened in this enterprise. Eder started using seedbeds to prepare and select the plants, he learned about pruning techniques to keep the coffee trees at a height suitable for harvest, and about the need for shade trees to mitigate the exposure of coffee plants to sunlight.<sup>38</sup>

By the mid-19th century, coffee farming represented the cutting edge of research on tropical agriculture around the world. Successful coffee plantations in the French colonies in the Caribbean and the British and Dutch colonies in the East Indies inspired a broad enthusiasm for this crop.<sup>39</sup> This enthusiasm motivated some independent countries with suitable geographic conditions, such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Brazil, to encourage investments, farming and research on coffee agriculture, mainly led by European entrepreneurs.<sup>40</sup> Despite the late interest shown by the Colombian government in this crop, effective only in the 1880s, foreign capitalists such as Eder carried out ground reconnaissance in various landscapes of Colombia. Colombo-British Eduardo Walker established the first coffee plantation near the city of Manizales, in the Central Andes Mountains in 1860, and in 1867 the British engineer Tyrell Moore did the same on the eastern mountain slopes of

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<sup>38</sup> Eder, 479–80.

<sup>39</sup> Stuart McCook, “Managing Monocultures: Coffee, The Coffee Rust, and the Science of Working Landscapes,” in *Knowing Global Environments: New Historical Perspectives on the Field of Sciences.*, ed. Jeremy Vetter (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 87, 107.

<sup>40</sup> Stefania Gallini, *Una Historia Ambiental Del Café En Guatemala: La Costa Cuca Entre 1830 y 1902*, Autores Invitados (Ciudad de Guatemala: AVANCSO, 2009).

Cundinamarca.<sup>41</sup> By the end of the century the epicenter of Colombian coffee production concentrated on Cundinamarca's slopes, whereas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the region between Manizales and Antioquia became the *Eje Cafetero* (coffee axis) of the country.

Aware of the context, Eder and his associates kept track of the latest advances in the field and in the best practices to execute a coffee plantation. Books such as *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo* by P.J. Laborie, first published in 1798 and a key manual for every 19<sup>th</sup> century coffee farmer, or *Memorias Sobre el Cultivo del Café* of 1856 by the Colombian historian and independence hero José Manuel Restrepo, occupied an important place on Eder's shelves. However, according to Phanor Eder, Jamaican coffee plantations were the main reference for the Palmyra Coffee Plantation, in line with the British foundations of the company.<sup>42</sup> These references identified two key factors that would determine the success of a coffee plantation: 1) the management of sunlight and wind exposure of the bushes and 2) the correct method for drying the beans. Eder's enterprise experienced complications in both stages.

To begin with, the lands of La Rita were not the most suitable to grow coffee due to their location exclusively on flat terrain. Quoting Laborie, "it is a fact beyond contradiction that the low mountains, and those near to the champaign country are, by far, less proper for the production of coffee, than those in high and interior situations."<sup>43</sup> Based on conditions in the Caribbean islands, this author believed lowlands were hotter and dryer, their soils light and shallow. In flatlands the bushes were exposed to the excesses of tropical winds, rain, and sunlight, factors less severe on mountainsides.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, the coffee plant requires intermittent shade due to its ecological origins in the rainforest, for which the strategic

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<sup>41</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 473, 474.

<sup>42</sup> Eder, 475.

<sup>43</sup> P. J. Laborie, *The Coffee Planter of Saint Domingo* (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1798), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Laborie, 7, 11.



location of canopy trees within the plantation was crucial. Often through native trees and plantain, the control of shade on the plantations also provided an economic surplus to the farm.<sup>45</sup> As the photograph of the plantation in La Rita in 1891 reveal (Figure 3.5), Eder properly applied the shade principles through native trees and an abundance of plantain palms (*musa paradisiaca*). By reproducing the original ecological conditions of coffee, Eder created a landscape capable of mitigating the topographical challenges of the plantation.



Figure 3.5: Coffee plantation in La Rita, 1890.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gallini, *Una Historia Ambiental Del Café En Guatemala*, 2009, 265.

<sup>46</sup> N.A. *Plantación de café en La Rita*, 1890, photograph, fotos, box 83, folder 13, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

For the first ten years, the coffee plantation operated under Eder's close eye. The project's initial plan was for 100,000 coffee bushes, beginning in 1869 with 30,000 and reaching 80,000 by 1878.<sup>47</sup> By 1872, bundles of coffee started to flow from Palmira to London (Figure 3.6). By then, La Rita produced roughly 100,000 pounds per year, according to Phanor's often exaggerated estimations. The Vogl Brothers maintained a skeptical view about the development of the plantation, as can be traced in letters complaining about further investments in the project.<sup>48</sup> In 1874, the Vogls wrote to Eder: "we told you to stop the further expansion of the Plantation with such time that the existing part shall grow self-supporting, but we did not want you to draw from the Coffee lead."<sup>49</sup> A year later, the average price of Colombian coffee in the New York market reached its peak at 20.5 cents per pound, a point from which it began to decline until the late-1880s recovery.<sup>50</sup> When the prices of coffee reached a critical low level in the international market in 1878, Eder sold Hacienda La Rita and its coffee plantation to the U.S citizen and resident of Palmira, Hernando Blum.

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<sup>47</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 477, 481; Certificate of debt between Hernando Blum and Santiago Eder, May 16, 1878, box 8, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>48</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, November 1, 1869, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, April 16, 1873, box 2, folder 5, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>49</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, August 1, 1874, box 4, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>50</sup> Charles W. Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978), 21.





Figure 3.6: Loading coffee sacks in La Rita, 1892.<sup>51</sup>

The liquidation of the Palmyra Coffee Plantation meant the closure of Santiago Eder's first agricultural enterprise in the Cauca River Valley, just at the twilight of the liberal era in Colombia. The coffee plantation aroused the interest of a sector of Caucan society eager for new productive opportunities to exploit the perceived wealth of the valley. Throughout the 1870s various personalities expressed their interest in Eder's coffee initiative, including local merchants and politicians Rafael Peña and the Reyes Brothers company, plus the top commercial societies in Cali, Piza, and Cerruti.<sup>52</sup> Even the national statistics office wrote to

<sup>51</sup> N.A. *Cargando bultos de café en La Rita*, 1892, photograph, fotos, box 76, folder 34, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>52</sup> Rafael Peña to Santiago Eder, June 24, 1869, box 1, folder 2, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; A.N. Henriquez to Santiago Eder, February 29, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Joshua Piza to Santiago Eder, October 16, 1870, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Manuel Carvajal to Santiago Eder, September 21, 1874, box 3, folder 5, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL. Rafael Peña was a local liberal politician and general from Popayan, brother of general David Peña, responsible for the looting of Cali in the civil war of 1876, after which he acted as governor of the province for the rest of the decade. The brothers Rafael and Elias Reyes composed a family partnership from Antioquia acclaimed for their business ventures in the Amazon foothills and jungles,

Eder with deep interest in the yields of his plantation.<sup>53</sup> During the subsequent years, the Blum brothers tried to sustain coffee production at La Rita, but the low prices, the political crisis in the country and a lack of investors forced them to abandon the crop, as happened to other coffee farmers throughout the region.<sup>54</sup>

Seven years later, in 1885 Eder bought La Rita back from the Blum family. He continued the coffee plantation, this time in association with the commercial house of the Rosing Brothers from London. In line with the national optimism for the coffee economy, Eder insisted on restoring the plantation from its damaged state after more than three years of abandonment. It took him from three to five years to resume the production, cleaning, pruning and replanting of bushes, while maintaining machinery and buildings.<sup>55</sup> This time, there was no pressure from external investors, and numerous references to thriving coffee plantations across the country, most of them located on the mountain slopes of western Cundinamarca.

Although information for this period is scarce and dispersed, Eder's correspondence with the Rosing Brothers reveals that in 1894 he shipped around 750 coffee bags from Palmira to London, equivalent to some 90,000 pounds and valued at US \$15,000.<sup>56</sup> While such quantities of coffee exports were not negligible, problems with the quality of the beans was a constant concern in the messages from London. That same year, the Rosing Brothers transmitted repetitive complaints about Eder's coffee, on one occasion saying: "Unfortunately, the arrival of coffee in wet state has been quite frequent, fermenting the grain

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where they inaugurated the export of cinchona bark first, and rubber later. In 1905, Rafael Reyes was elected president of Colombia. His government became famous because of his non-partisan affiliation, the decentralization of the government, and his final impeachment by the traditional elites. Safford and Palacios, *Colombia. Fragmented Land, Divided Society*.

<sup>53</sup> Manuel Carvajal to Santiago Eder, September 21, 1874, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

<sup>54</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 482.

<sup>55</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 482-486

<sup>56</sup> Rosing Brothers to Santiago Eder, March 24, 1894, box 4, folder 6, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 486.



and showing an appearance that buyers do not like.” In the search for causes of such inconveniences, Eder blamed poor conditions in steamships holds, where the coffee spent several days before reaching European shores. However, the Rosings disagreed with him, stating: “In our belief, it is the fault of the humid climate in Buenaventura and the cool nights in the trail to reach the port, where without a doubt it gets wet crossing the rivers” (Figure 3.7).<sup>57</sup>



Figure 3.7: Navigation in the Dagua River, drawing by Neuville.<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the 1890s, investments in the plantation continued to grow, especially in new machinery. In 1895, Santiago purchased from New York a new huller to depulp the beans.<sup>59</sup> In an appraisal of his goods, Eder calculated a huge increase in the value of La Rita’s

<sup>57</sup> Rosing Brothers to Santiago Eder, March 24, 1894, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

<sup>58</sup> Alfred-Arthur Brunel de Neuville, *Navegación en el río Dagua*, n.d., etching. Navas and Villegas, *Colombia en Le Tour du Monde*, T.I, 167.

<sup>59</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 486.

coffee plantation, from \$1,647 in 1899 to \$58,191 in 1903, which can only be explained by an acquisition of new machinery, as the land area remained the same.<sup>60</sup> Despite a decrease in production rates at La Rita, Eder refused to abandon the agricultural business, certainly due to the prestige acquired by coffee in Colombia's economy and society by the end of the century. Between 1888 and 1891, Colombian coffee exports reached their highest numbers of the century, generating a total value of \$4,170,400 gold pesos, the second-best export results since the short-lived boom of chinchona bark in 1883 (Figure 3.8). In 1898, the bags of coffee sent abroad weighed about 31,886 tons, in spite of a recent decrease in prices and the beginning of a new civil war from 1899 to 1901.<sup>61</sup>

Due to a lack of experience and expert guidance about coffee farming in the valley, Eder's plantation undertook constant experimentation. It was a learning process, through which Eder grappled with new agricultural practices and captured the fertility of his lands in response to historical shifts. Based on a letter transcribed by Phanor Eder, by 1896, Santiago seemed to have accumulated enough experience in the field to address the problem of low yields. He wrote: "Undoubtedly, the *cafetal* needs fertilizer; it has been working for near thirty years, and the average age of the trees is twenty-five. I blame the soil depletion for the lower yields."<sup>62</sup> By understanding soil nutrients as an indicator to explain the decline of yields in the farm, Eder evidenced signs of a shift from a non-fertilizer agrarian context to one more demanding of farming practices to restore the nutrients to the soil. However, considering Eder's background and influences from the industrialized world, these practices most likely were based on the import of artificial fertilizer. In order to mitigate the losses of

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<sup>60</sup> Inventory of assets between 1899 and 1903 by Santiago Eder, 1903, box 2, folder 19, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>61</sup> Safford and Palacios, *Colombia. Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 230; Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 486.

such a process of trial and error, the partnership between Eder and the Vogls relied upon constant trading of tobacco purchased from Palmira's farmers.<sup>63</sup> Whereas coffee was an exception in this region, tobacco symbolized the agricultural renewal of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Cauca River Valley.

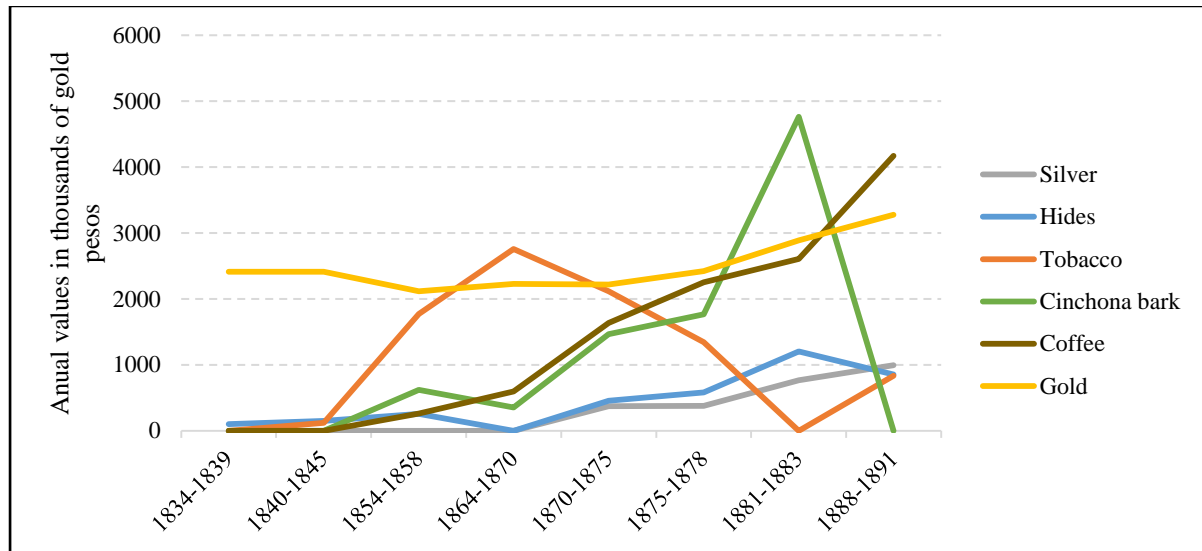
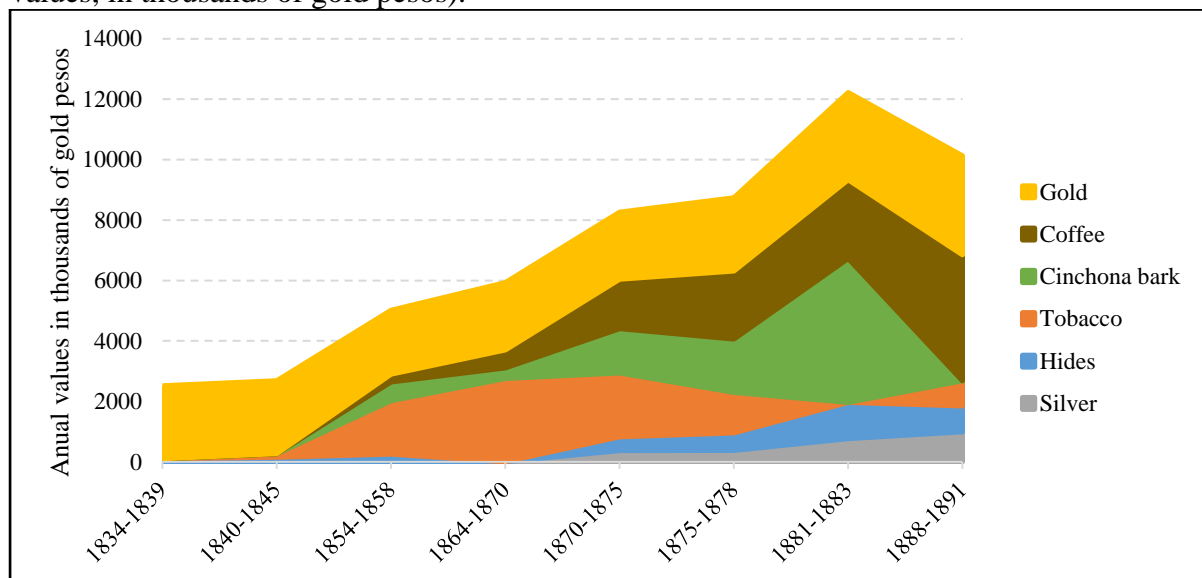


Figure 3.8: Colombia's top exports in 5 periods between 1864 and 1891 (mean annual values, in thousands of gold pesos).<sup>64</sup>



<sup>63</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, August 1, 1868, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, December 16, 1868, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, June 5, 1869, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>64</sup> Safford and Palacios, *Colombia. Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, 230.

Figure 3.9: Colombia's top exports aggregated in five periods between 1864 and 1891 (mean annual values, in thousands of gold pesos).<sup>65</sup>

### 3.2.2 Tobacco and indigo: local capacities and demands abroad

Santiago Eder never farmed tobacco on his lands, yet this product was essential to the sustenance of the Hacienda la Manuelita, where the leaves purchased from Palmira's farmers were processed and packed for export. Although marginal in the national economy, the tobacco grown in Palmira was well known for its quality. As the French traveler Charles Saffray pointed out in 1861: "This crop deserves the focused attention of foreigners; it does not demand many advanced practices, and its price supports high transportation costs."<sup>66</sup> In fact, the rise of Palmira as a growing and progressive city was directly linked to the production of tobacco, as an identity trait throughout the century. In the words of speaker and traveler from Cali Luciano Rivera in 1886: "Palmira is the youngest township in the Cauca State and the one of fastest growing, due to the industrious spirit of its early sons who knew how to manage the soil's fertility, which is particularly good for the cultivation of tobacco."<sup>67</sup>

When Eder arrived in Colombia, tobacco exports were at a peak (Figure 3.8). It is no wonder why he was so emphatic about investing in this product, which he did by buying the produce from local growers, selecting high quality leaves, packing the loads and sending them to commercial houses in London, England, and Bremen, Germany. Tobacco from the Cauca Valley was appreciated in Europe particularly as the external layer of the cigars, as the

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<sup>65</sup> Safford and Palacios, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Este cultivo es uno de los que más merecen llamar la atención de los extranjeros; no exige muchos adelantos y el precio del artículo permite soportar los crecidos gastos de transporte. Charles Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1948), 239.

<sup>67</sup> Es la menos antigua de las poblaciones principales del Estado del Cauca, y al propio tiempo una de las que han progresado más rápidamente, debido al espíritu industrioso de sus hijos, que en oportunidad supieron aprovechar la feracidad del suelo, adecuado, sobretodo, para el cultivo del tabaco. Luciano Rivera y Garrido, *Algo Sobre El Valle Del Cauca (Impresiones y Recuerdos de Un Conferencista)* (Buga: Imprenta R. A. Pastrana, 1886), 55.

Vogl Brothers explained to Eder in a letter of 1869: “The Palmyra Tabaco is principally used as a cover leaf, for which purpose small ones are entirely unviable.”<sup>68</sup> Two years later, they kept complaining about the failure to provide the proper selection of tobacco and constant problems in the packing of the exported loads:

One of the biggest problems is to find in the center of the packages many leaves eaten by caterpillars and too many small leaves. This, naturally, decreases the prices and makes you judge if it would be better to pick the tobacco and ship the big, silky and brown leaves separated [...] Palmyra’s tobacco is used mainly for the cover, for which are useless smaller leaves.<sup>69</sup>

The development of tobacco production in Palmira between the 1830s and 1870s followed a steady growth (Figure 3.10), which diverged with the parallel decrease of Colombia’s tobacco exports overall (Figure 3.8). This is explained because, although famous, the amounts of tobacco produced in the Cauca Valley were meager in the national context, dominated by plantations in the provinces of Cundinamarca and Santander, in the eastern Andes Mountains. Because the crop could be grown profitably on a small scale and still produce fair yields, tobacco farming supported a growing number of black and mestizo communities in the Cauca River Valley, particularly south of Palmira. However, according to historical geographer Luis Valdivia Rojas, after the elimination of the state monopoly over tobacco in 1850 and slave abolition in 1851, Cauca’s landlords absorbed the freed workers by turning peasants into tenants to farm tobacco, a dynamic encouraged by local authorities due to the growing popularity of the crop.<sup>70</sup> As reported in the newspaper “El Ferrocarril” in June 1878, in the hacienda Güengüe “many tenants are dedicated exclusively to farming tobacco”, and near Palmira there are “numerous *tabacales* (tobacco crops) kept by blacks, whose huts are raised in the shade of the forest.”<sup>71</sup> Through a basic tenant relationship, these peasants

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<sup>68</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, June 5, 1869, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

<sup>69</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, December 16, 1868, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL.

<sup>70</sup> Luis Valdivia Rojas, *Economía y Espacio: El Valle Del Cauca 1850 a 1950* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1992), 42.

<sup>71</sup> *El Ferrocarril*. No. 19 of June 21 of 1878. In: Valdivia Rojas, *Economía y Espacio*, 42.

farmed tobacco for the hacendados on leased lands, in exchange for the right to live and plant their subsistence crops on the same land.<sup>72</sup>

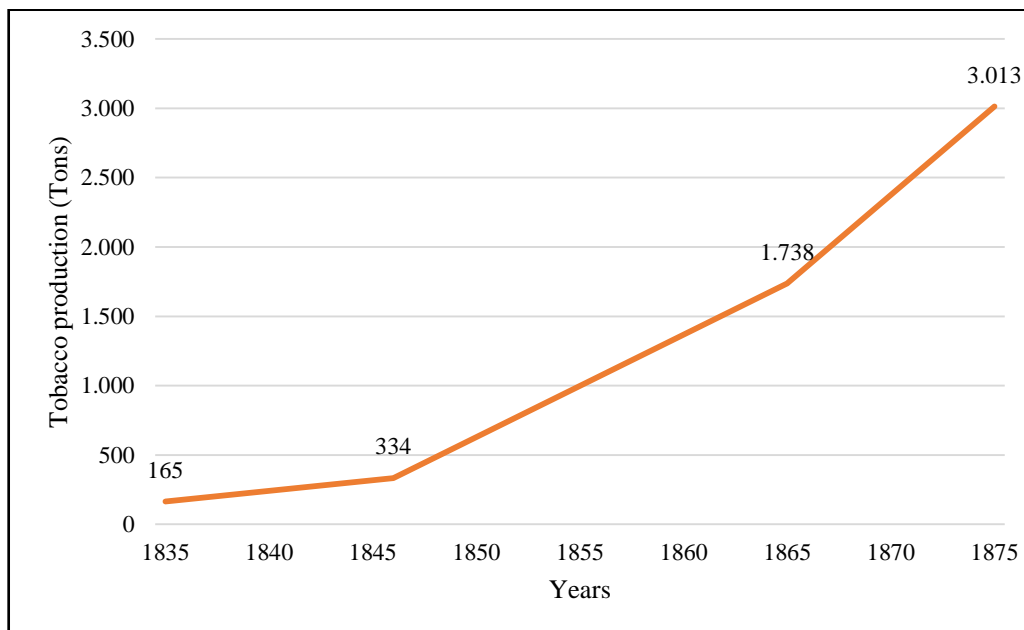


Figure 3.10: Tobacco production in Palmira for available years.<sup>73</sup>

Even though there is no evidence of tobacco crops at the Hacienda La Manuelita, neither by Eder nor tenants, Santiago’s personal correspondence demonstrates his awareness of ways to improve tobacco’s cultivation in the region. For instance, in 1869 an unknown English-speaking traveler wrote to Eder from Buenaventura with some interesting thoughts about the farming of tobacco in Palmira. Apparently driven by a contract with Pacifico Orejuela, a landowner in the area of La Torre, the author “had the opportunity of inspecting and observing the way of cultivating tobacco (sic)”, which he thought may be improved “by performing the same operation of cultivation and care, as it is done in Cuba”. And he remarked:

I took upon my self the care of studing (sic) carefully, during my permanence back there (in Cuba) the ways of cultivating, caring and planting the tobacco (sic) from its first state

<sup>72</sup> Mejía Parado, *Origen Del Campesino Vallecuacano*, 122.

<sup>73</sup> Valdivia Rojas, *Economia y Espacio*, 43.



of sowing, preparing the land for it, and all the different bituminous composition and Guano which it is used in the Buelta Abajo and I think that I could raise such kind of tobacco (sic) which it could be sold after a time for double of what the best tobacco is sold in Palmira.<sup>74</sup>

The letter advises the use of modern fertilizing practices, based in bituminous coal and guano, to adapt the soils to support Cuban species of tobacco, with better prices and demand.

Whether Eder asked for the information or not, the epistle was directed to him in friendly language, suggesting that the author knew him and knew his interest in such knowledge.

Years later, in 1874, Eder invested in the *tabacalera* (tobacco farm) of Jacinto Luna in Pradera. The only account of the farm is from October of the same year, and it shows a considerable investment from Eder of 6,562 pesos, 95% of which went toward the wages of *cocecheros* (harvesters). The farm's production was over 1,164 kg of 1<sup>st</sup> class leaves complementing previous harvests for a total of 3,384 kg, and some more of 2<sup>nd</sup> class.<sup>75</sup>

Eder remained in the tobacco processing business in parallel to his agricultural activities. In 1870, he shipped 90 packages of about 50 kg each to Bremen, 124 to Paris, 20 to Panama, and 235 to London.<sup>76</sup> Later that decade his production rates decreased due to the international crisis of 1873 and the collapse of prices, but mainly because of constant problems related to drying, selecting, packing and transporting the product.<sup>77</sup> Similar to coffee, complications in the packing of tobacco were recurrent throughout Eder's export enterprise. In part, the problems originated with the quality of the leaves, though more common was the infiltration of humidity during their travel over the hazardous Dagua trail between Palmira and the Pacific Ocean. When the loads arrived wet at Buenaventura, Eder's

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<sup>74</sup> N.A. to Santiago Eder, October 30, 1868, box 1, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>75</sup> J.M. Luna to Santiago Eder, May 12, 1874, box 3, folder 4, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Jacinto Luna to Santiago Eder, October 7, 1874, box 3, folder 5, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>76</sup> Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, August 1, 1868, Phanor Eder Papers, UML, FL. Joshua Piza to Santiago Eder, October 16, 1870, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Meyer Reinberg to Santiago Eder, March 2, 1871, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>77</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 431.

agents there had to unpack the bundles, repeat the selection of the leaves, remove those spoiled, and dry in the sun those that could be saved. That was a difficult task considering that 100% humidity prevails in this city for the entire year.<sup>78</sup>

Tobacco was not Eder's only side activity. In 1869, his brother Henry sent samples of indigo from the Cauca River Valley to the French firm in Boudreaux, H. Rozier & Co. Keen on the quality of the product, they insisted that Eder should venture into farming this *Fabaceae* plant to supply the high demand for dye from the textile industry, particularly due to the current supply shortage in Bengali after the 1857 Great Indian Rebellion.<sup>79</sup> For a long time, indigo was an important source of cloth dye in Europe, and it was also used by Latin American artisans since pre-Columbian times. In 1861, Charles Saffray pointed out the abundance of indigo in the Cauca Valley, which together with cotton and vanilla "grow spontaneously, but are not farmed anywhere."<sup>80</sup> The production of indigo was a good deal in many ways. The shrubs grew rapidly and were ready to harvest in just three months. The coloring paste was obtained from the leaves after soaking for several hours, then boiled and compressed. Farming indigo was quick and its processing straightforward. Another advantage of indigo over other products was its high value to weight ratio; large amounts of the paste could be exported in small packages, reducing considerably the transport costs in comparison with other products. This was a prized advantage considering the high transport costs and poor condition of trails to the Pacific.<sup>81</sup>

In 1869, Eder invested in farming indigo with Fortunato Cabal in the Hacienda El Limonar, near Buga. Their projection was to cultivate about 38 hectares to produce between

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<sup>78</sup> Eder & co. to Santiago Eder, November 1, 1873, box 3, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>79</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 469.

<sup>80</sup> Saffray, *Viaje a Nueva Granada*, 225.

<sup>81</sup> Francisco José Alarcon and Daniel Gustavo Arias, "La Producción y Comercialización Del Añil En Colombia 1850-1880," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 0, no. 15 (1987): 168.

seven and eight thousand pounds of indigo for export annually.<sup>82</sup> Although there is no concrete data about the production resulting from this initiative, by 1872 Eder and Cabal were still trading indigo seeds and sending loads to Bremen and Bordeaux.<sup>83</sup> Simultaneously, in 1870 Eder invested in the Hacienda El Albergue, also near Buga, where Mariano Olarte started a promising indigo plantation. However, in Rozier & Co.'s opinion, the paste produced in El Albergue was not of good quality and was difficult to sell, unlike typical Colombian indigo which "is increasingly appreciated by the dyers."<sup>84</sup> After a short period of good results between 1871 and 1872, El Albergue was sold and Eder abandoned the business of indigo, according to his son because he knew it was an ephemeral bonanza due to the high quality of Asian indigos in European markets.<sup>85</sup>

### **3.2.3 Sugarcane, cattle and the path to monoculture**

Coffee, tobacco, and indigo were Eder's early ventures to diversify production and capture the fertility of soils in the Cauca River Valley for the sake of an export economy. Varying in times and spaces, the trends of these products were closely related to the fluctuation of prices in the Atlantic market, the political oscillations of the country, technological improvements, and transport conditions. Access to land was never a problem for Eder. Beyond his own generous estates, there were always potential partners who trusted their properties to him for associated agricultural endeavors. Neither was access to labor a limit, as his enterprise operated at a time of demographic growth and an unequal labor system

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<sup>82</sup> Matias Fernandez to Santiago Eder, November 9, 1868, box 1, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>83</sup> Rafael González to Santiago Eder, February 15, 1869, box 1, folder 2, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Fortunato Cabal to Santiago Eder, April 1, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Fortunato Cabal to Santiago Eder, June 28, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Fortunato Cabal to Santiago Eder, August 22, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>84</sup> Ramon Guzman to Santiago Eder, November 8, 1872, box 2, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>85</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 473.

of cheap wages and tenant services. One constant in this process was sugarcane, which never stopped being harvested and processed in the Hacienda La Manuelita.

Sugarcane persisted in the history of land use in the Cauca River Valley since it was introduced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It became common for every hacienda in the valley to grow cane in a smaller or larger amount. From cane processed in ancient sugar mills came blocks of brown sugar (*panela*), liquor distilled from its juice (*aguardiente* or rum), and molasses that provided an effective source of calories for cattle. Due to the high costs of transportation to move these products to the sea or even to Bogota, sugar production in the valley historically supplied southern Colombian markets, from Popayan to Quito. Strategically, Eder understood that persistent production of cane could help him maintain the haciendas while experimenting with other businesses. By the turn of the century, sugarcane began to excel as the most reliable cash crop for the future of the Cauca River Valley.

The reason for the success of sugarcane as a historical crop in the valley comes from its particular natural conditions. Due to its latitude in relation to the equator, the Cauca River Valley gets a constant level of sunlight suitable for growing this *saccharum*, similar to the conditions in its place of origin in South-East Asia. In addition, the flatlands of the valley are composed of a combination of alluvial and volcanic soils rich in nutrients, and are irrigated by over 39 streams that flow from the mountain ranges across a gentle slope. Due to these factors, the valley is one of the few landscapes in the world where sugarcane can be harvested throughout the whole year, without depending on seasons or climatic cycles.<sup>86</sup> Such characteristics justified the historical attention to this crop in the Cauca River Valley by local hacendados, foreign naturalists, and progressive farmers such as Santiago Eder. Ironically, the plans to establish an early agro-export model of sugarcane was also constrained by the

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<sup>86</sup> Olga Lucía Delgadillo Vargas, “La caña de azúcar en la historia ambiental del valle geográfico del río Cauca (1864-2010)” (Universidad Javeriana de Colombia, 2014), 36, 57.

valley's nature and its limits to transportation. While prominent dry tropical forests and wetlands imposed a barrier to cross the big Cauca River, the rugged Andes Mountains and dense Pacific jungles kept the valley isolated from the port.

During the five years after acquiring Hacienda La Manuelita in 1864, Eder's first investments went toward machinery needed to enhance the sugar mill. The new technology sought to improve the mill's energy supply with the installation of a Pelton Wheel, which transformed the traditional energy supply of animal traction to hydraulic energy from a ditch specially positioned for the factory. Furthermore, Eder set up a narrow-gauge railway line to ease the movement of products and materials, and imported a modern copper-made alcohol distiller to improve the production of liquor (Figure 3.11). In 1874, more technological improvements came to the mill, when a "Louisiana No. 1" grinder was purchased from U.S. manufacturers Geo L. Squier, together with replacement parts for the workshop and windmill.<sup>87</sup> Over time, La Manuelita's sugar mill became nationally famous for its superior technology, more than for its yields. The Cauca Valley appeared as an important sugarcane producer in the country only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before then, most of the sugar was grown on the hills of the Magdalena Valley in Cundinamarca.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 514.

<sup>88</sup> Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, *Alimentos Para La Ciudad* (Bogotá: Planeta, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2015).



Figure 3.11: Oxen pulling sugarcane wagons over rails, 1903.<sup>89</sup>

For the 1880s, Phanor Eder estimated rates of sugarcane production in La Manuelita at 11,663 *panes* (brown sugar bricks of around 1 pound each) in 1884, which decreased to 1,614 *panes* in 1885 due to a locust plague, but grew again to 5,474 in 1886, 5,510 in 1887, 7,721 in 1891, and 4,129 by 1893.<sup>90</sup> Part of this sugar was sold in Cauca's cities, while another important part was traded in Panama and Guayaquil.<sup>91</sup> By the mid-1890s, the sugar plantation in La Manuelita experienced a steady decline, which Eder understood was caused by soil depletion after long-term farming in the same area. He wrote in an 1896 letter: "About the

<sup>89</sup> N.A. *Bueyes tirando vagones con caña sobre rieles*, 1903, photograph, fotos, box 88, folder 13, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>90</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 517.

<sup>91</sup> Eder, Meyer & Seckel to Santiago Eder, September 10, 1868, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Vogl Brothers to Santiago Eder, December 1, 1868, box 2, folder 3, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Rosing Brothers to Santiago Eder, March 24, 1894, box 4, folder 6, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

*cañaveral* (sugarcane crops), I believe that the old plantation is exhausted and the soil needs either fertilizer or rest; that old plantation has a productive tradition of 60 to 70 years.”<sup>92</sup> To overcome this situation, it appears that Eder applied rotation of crops to leave the soils to rest. Five years later he expanded the sugar plantation over former pasture areas in La Manuelita and purchased the contiguous Hacienda Santa Gertrudis, while investing in a new technological upgrade of the sugar mill.



Figure 3.12: Processing sugar in La Manuelita, 1892.<sup>93</sup>

In order to restore the fertility of La Manuelita’s soils by the end of the century, Eder applied different practices. The rotation of farmed lands and the transformation of pastures into crops allowed the stubble to restore soil nutrients. In addition, Phanor Eder mentions that his father used to leave the leaf litter in the ground of the plantation, in between the furrows

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<sup>92</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 517.

<sup>93</sup> N.A. *Proceso del azúcar de pan*, 1892, photograph, fotos, box 88, folder 7, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

as a way to control weeds, preserve soil moisture and maintain the fertility of the soil.<sup>94</sup>

While the sugar plantation expanded in the following decades and the path to monoculture opened, the input of imported fertilizers became an imperative of Eder's agricultural company. Since early twentieth century, the guild of Cauca entrepreneurs (the Eders among them) began to introduce fertilizers such as saltpeter, Sosa Nitrate and Nitrophoska into the Cauca River Valley.<sup>95</sup>

In parallel to the production of sugar, Eder's haciendas maintained movements of livestock within the region. The cattle activity was led by Constantino Mayendorff, Eder's nephew, who followed him from Russia in 1867. In some cases, Mayendorff played the role of steward in charge of the cattle in La Manuelita, La Rita, and Oriente. He managed the breeding and marketing of oxen, mules and horses, which required establishing relationships with neighboring ranchers and local merchants.<sup>96</sup> Livestock production provided several services for Eder's enterprise. He could supply the constant demand for meat in Buenaventura, to feed laborers in the gold mines in Choco. Work animals also were an enduring source of transport and agricultural labor. Besides the personal horses or the plow oxen, a strong herd of mules was important for the working of any 19<sup>th</sup> century plantation to transport loads within and outside the valley. In line with most of the ranchers in the valley, Eder maintained the African pasture paddocks of La Manuelita in good condition, which by 1899 represented 54% of the total 648 hectares of the hacienda (Table 3.1).<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 522.

<sup>95</sup> Delgadillo Vargas, "La caña de azúcar en la historia ambiental del valle geográfico del río Cauca (1864-2010)," 106.

<sup>96</sup> Ignacio Martínez to Santiago Eder, November 3, 1868, box 1, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Ignacio Martínez to Santiago Eder, February 7, 1869, box 1, folder 2, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Alfonso Gautier to Santiago Eder, November 24, 1873, box 3, folder 1, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL; Esteban Sarmiento to Santiago Eder, February 13, 1874, box 4, folder 2, Phanor Eder Papers, Special Collections, UML, FL.

<sup>97</sup> Inventory of assets between 1899 and 1903 by Santiago Eder, 1903, box 2, folder 19, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.



Hacienda	Item	Inventory 1899		Inventory 1903		Increase	Decrease
		Amount	Value	Amount	Value		
La Manuelita	La Manuelita House, buildings		\$7,500		\$7,500		
	Mill & machines		\$7,500		\$7,500		
	New machinery		\$36,414		<b>\$57,830</b>	\$21,414	
	New office buildings				\$2,171	\$2,171	
	Alambique		\$2,000		\$2,000		
	Sugar plantation (\$40)	180	\$7,200	400	<b>\$16,000</b>	\$8,800	
	Pastures (\$20)	447	\$8,940	310	\$6,210		\$2,730
	Guinea (\$32)	137	\$4,384	137	\$4,384		
	Monte (\$12)	220	\$2,640	142	\$1,704		\$936
	Guaduales (\$32)	30	\$960	30	\$960		
	Plantain (\$20)			30	\$600	\$600	
	Waste lands (\$10)			40	\$400	\$400	
	Horses	50	\$2,976	93	\$5,20	\$2,044	
	Oxen	192	\$6,144	178	\$6,230	\$86	
	Mules	150	\$9,000	207	\$8,280		\$720
	Inventory (inc. carts & harness)		\$1,001		\$8,065	\$7,064	
	Cash		\$71		\$119	\$48	
	Stock of sugar		\$2,184		\$9,235	\$7,050	
La Rita	House, floors, machinery						
	Plantations	123		123			
	Pastures	10		10			
	Llanos (20)	76	\$1,520			\$1,520	
	Inventory		\$5,935		\$2,381		\$3,555
	Brick machinery		\$570		\$731	\$161	
	Coffee		\$1,647		<b>\$58,191</b>	\$36.544	
	Cacao		\$4,440		\$19		\$4.420
	Hides		\$782		\$782		
	Salt		\$190		\$1,141	951	
	Cattle	953	\$12,750	1484	\$30,217	\$17,466	
	Mules	119	\$3,252	69	\$1,575		\$1677
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$130,000</b>		<b>\$239,243</b>	<b>\$106,319</b>	<b>\$14,038</b>

Table 3.1. . Santiago M. Eder Comparative Statement of 1899 (July) and 1903 (Aug.) (Area in plazas equivalent to 0.64 hectares each, and livestock in head).<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Inventory of assets between 1899 and 1903 by Santiago Eder, 1903, box 2, folder 19, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

Whereas coffee, tobacco and indigo farming were speculative projects to find ways to diversify cash crops for the export market, sugarcane represented a secure endeavor, with stable yields either for export or internal circulation. The systematic technological improvements suggest that from the beginning, Eder knew sugarcane was the commodity destined to thrive in the Cauca River Valley. The major obstacles to achieving wealth were poor transport conditions to connect the valley with the port, the introduction of industrial technology and specialized labor, and the resistance of strong local elites devoted to the older manorial social structure.

At the turn of the century, La Manuelita was consolidated as a liberal hacienda. With his sons already grown, large extents of land under his domain, farms of sugarcane, livestock and coffee, and modern machinery installed, Santiago Eder incorporated the Cauca Valley Agricultural Company in 1903, consolidating his empire. In practice, this meant that the enterprise would be managed by a board of directors, financed by shareholders, and management discussions centralized for all the landed estates. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Company, which in 1919 was renamed Compañía Agrícola Caucana, gave shape to the Ingenio Manuelita S.A. sugar mill that today is still managed by the Eder family.

Table 3.1 displays Eder's inventory of the haciendas La Manuelita and La Rita as of 1899 and 1903. In 1899 (representative of the forty years addressed in this chapter), both haciendas made up 783 ha. About half (48%) was in pastures (natural and guinea), 26% in forests (*montes* and bamboo), 15% in sugarcane (entirely within La Manuelita), and 10% in coffee (in La Rita). The installation of the steam mill and the focus on sugar production after 1901, saw sugarcane crops increase to 33%, at the expense of pasture reduction to 37%, and forests to 14%. Presumably other crops, such as plantain, corn, and cacao were of minimal importance and irrelevant for the purpose of the inventory. The data in this significant document presents the material situation of Eder's haciendas in the transition toward a

corporate model aimed exclusively at sugarcane monoculture in the valley, the consolidation of the liberal hacienda.<sup>99</sup>

In 1897, Charles Eder, Santiago's eldest son, traveled to Scotland to visit the offices of McConey Harvey & Co., and to purchase the machinery that would convert La Manuelita's sugar mill into a steam-powered industrial mill. Challenging all the odds, the Eders' managed to transport the heavy and cumbersome appliances by a herd of mules through the rugged trail over the mountains from Buenaventura to Palmira (Figure 3.13). Such a task was even more difficult, considering the bloody One-Thousand Days War in which Colombia was then immersed. Just a few months before the arrival of the imported load, government forces defeated the rebels in the Pacific ports.<sup>100</sup> The assembly of the steam mill on January 1, 1901, inaugurated the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Cauca River Valley, as a symbol of the energy transition through which would be possible the agricultural modernization that still required another few decades to complete.

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<sup>99</sup> Inventory of assets between 1899 and 1903 by Santiago Eder, 1903, box 2, folder 19, AHLM, Palmira, Colombia.

<sup>100</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 525.



Figure 3.13: Oxen and mules transporting machinery from Buenaventura to Cali for La Manuelita's steam sugar mill, 1899.<sup>101</sup>

Between 1864 and 1901, the sugar mill in La Manuelita was subject to technological changes particularly focused on its energy sources. In the first instance, the mill to grind the canes was driven by animal traction, as was every *trapiche* in the valley (Figure 2.6). The animals used for this task were horses, mules and oxen selected from livestock fed in the pastures attached to the sugar fields in the manorial land use scheme. The installation of a Pelton Wheel in 1867 replaced the animals with hydraulic power provided by one of the canals that flowed through the hacienda's lands. Although hydraulic energy was more stable and required less work, it was susceptible to dry seasons and disturbances in the upper stream. The steam-powered mill installed in 1901 changed drastically these energy dynamics

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<sup>101</sup> N.A. Bueyes y carretas utilizados como transporte, para las maquinarias del Ingenio Manuelita a fines del Siglo XIX. *Camino de herradura entre Cali y Córdoba*. Palmira, 1899. Biblioteca Departamental del Valle del Cauca, Exposiciones Virtuales. <http://expovirtuales.bibliovalle.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/0102893.jpg>

by demanding higher fuel sources to process a previously unimaginable 50 tons of cane every 12 hours, with a yield of 5 tons of sugar per day.<sup>102</sup>

The sources of fuel for the steam factory are unknown, but it is likely that they initially supplied the boilers with timber extracted from patches of dry tropical forest in the flatlands and foothills of the valley. Because steam engines were scarce in the country and located in northern provinces, there was no coal market at the turn of the century, particularly in the southern estates of Colombia. Before this technology arrived, traditional sugar mills required constant supplies of timber to boil the molasses and crystalize the sugar, which was supplied by native forests, but also from the remaining biomass of ground canes, a practice that is still used today as part of the sugar production cycle.<sup>103</sup> However, the extra demand for fuel for the steam factory signified a higher demand of timber from the remaining local forests, maybe subtle in the first years but evident in the long term before the consolidation of a coal market, particularly when additional industrialized mills opened in the region. La Manuelita's sugar mill was thus also a pioneer of the environmental impacts of industrial agriculture in the Cauca Valley. Following Eder's example, 25 years later, the next industrial mill in the region was also located in the basin of the Amaime River, in the lands of La Providencia just east of La Concepción (Figure 2.3) Ingenio Providencia was founded by Modesto Cabal in 1926, in the same year that Hernando Caicedo inaugurated Ingenio Riopaila in Buga, on lands of the hacienda La Paila where Eder had invested in the past.

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In 1899 Colombia fell into the One Thousand Days war, a partisan conflict between Conservative and Liberal parties that bled the country in almost every inhabited region.

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<sup>102</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 526.

<sup>103</sup> Delgadillo Vargas, "La caña de azúcar en la historia ambiental del valle geográfico del río Cauca (1864-2010)".

Although the liberal regime ended in the late 1870s, when economic recession and divisions inside the party opened the doors for conservatives to rise, the radical and authoritarian legacy of the liberal era left several wounds open. The immediate outcome of these wounds was reflected in the reactionary discourse imposed by the conservative *Regeneration* and its constitution of 1886, in which Colombia became a centralized and Catholic republic. Conservatives followed a protectionist economic policy through increased revenues and reliant on the second boom of coffee exports. However, the liberal economic culture based on a free market was already rooted among Colombia's elites, independent of political affinities, provoking fragmentation even within the conservative party. The One Thousand Days war was the result of authoritarian measures of the *Regeneration* against the surviving radical liberal representatives in the regions, the general disapproval of their protectionist policies and, as in most Colombian conflicts, the state's inability to control its territory.<sup>104</sup>

The conservative turn impacted the business enthusiasm that had spread in the Cauca River Valley through the previous decades, forcing entrepreneurs like Eder to concentrate on secure agricultural business such as sugarcane and livestock. Additionally, the political instability and public violence in the countryside frightened numerous foreign and local elites, who abandoned and sold their properties.<sup>105</sup> In parallel, peasant communities in the southern part of the Valley were displaced by the violence concentrated around important conservative haciendas in Caloto and Quilichao. These families migrated to northern areas, forming new *caseríos* in between Candelaria and Palmira, and became a constant source of troops for the liberal guerrillas.<sup>106</sup> With promises of land concessions, landless peasants

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<sup>104</sup> Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*.

<sup>105</sup> Between 1899 and 1901 land transactions in the Valley increased considerably. During war times rebel and official armies threatened the stability of haciendas and rural properties, by forcefully demanding supplies of food for the troops and recruiting workers. In parallel, the instability allowed landless communities to invade private properties.

<sup>106</sup> Almario García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 88.

followed the Liberal Party, although, when the war ended, liberal landlords betrayed such promises and took the advantage to increase their properties.<sup>107</sup> While the One Thousand Days War created the conditions to intensify the land tenure dynamics of informal settlements and estate fragmentation, it also caused a return to land use patterns based on livestock first, and sugarcane second.

As an analytical concept, the liberal hacienda allows to understand the incursion, adaptation, and consolidation of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism in Latin American agricultural landscapes, while explaining the ecology behind the boom of commodities production. By considering the land as a commodity and diversifying the investments, Eder was able to experiment and fail with various crops without threatening the endurance of his enterprise, something impossible to other farmers in the Valley. The liberal hacienda can only be explained through the wider commercial circuit in which it stood, the personal ambitions of its owner, and his capability to adapt to traditionally closed cultures. Its appropriation and commodification of nature set the grounds for further agricultural modernization endeavors, by establishing a way of thinking closely related to governmental ambitions that eventually became the status quo in the region, particularly when the Cauca Valley State was created in 1910.

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<sup>107</sup> This situation aggravated the social resentment of Indigenous and black communities particularly in the southern part of the Valley, who created their own guerillas to carry on a struggle that continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, 70.

## Conclusions

In 1910, the Cauca Valley became a state independent from Popayan as a consequence of the demographic growth, social change and economic takeoff experienced in the region throughout the past five decades. With headquarters in Cali, influential merchants and entrepreneurs composed the emergent provincial government driven by business optimism engendered by the liberal era. That optimism had recently been enhanced by technological and infrastructure improvements, such as La Manuelita's steam sugar mill and the opening of the Pacific Railroad between Buenaventura and Cali in 1910. This territorial recognition guaranteed the establishment of provincial funding and institutions focused on the development of projects designed by the heirs of the liberal political tradition and exponents of a specific relationship with nature.<sup>1</sup>

A belief in the Valley's natural richness and the need to seize it for agrarian "modernization" constituted the backbone of regional identity. However, two obstacles, one natural and one social, blocked their path to "progress". The first challenge was the lack of proper transport trails across the Cauca River to complete the Pacific commercial circuit. Second was the stubbornness of the hacendados on the Valley's flatlands in maintaining their traditional land use based on livestock.<sup>2</sup> The socioecological standpoint of Cauca Valley politicians and entrepreneurs in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century about the prospects for this agricultural landscape resumed a narrative conceived by foreign visitors many decades before. In order to legitimize agricultural modernization, the new Cauca Valley's authorities needed a historical representation of a static and misused landscape to create the necessity of "modernization."

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Motta González and Aceneth Perafán Cabrera, *Historia Ambiental Del Valle Del Cauca, Geoespacialidad, Cultura y Género* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 2012), 125.

<sup>2</sup> Óscar Almario García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940: Espacio, Poblamiento, Poder y Cultura* (Popayán: Editorial Universidad del Cauca, 2013). 150.



North American and European travelers played a role in the material configuration of the Cauca River Valley as spectators, storytellers and agents of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal thinking. In spite of their diverse interests, perspectives and writing styles, travelers who visited the Valley between the 1820s and 1890s agreed that the relationship between people and nature was a cornerstone to explain the particular agricultural condition of this landscape. By acknowledging the Valley's natural richness, travelers created an image of a landscape frozen in time, whose wealth remained misused by a society adapted to their environment and unsuited to take advantage of it. That analysis of "wealth and misuse" was the product of spatial narratives, created by sporadic visitors with preconceptions influenced by conditions in other regions and external philosophical ideals of "proper uses" for tropical nature. As such, this narrative neglected the complex changes already under way in the Valley at the same time, particularly the undermining of colonial agrarian structures based on the manorial hacienda.

The configuration of an agricultural landscape in the Cauca River Valley between 1864 and 1901 was the result of an encounter between different social groups with unequal opportunities to access productive land, diverse needs, and competing interests in using these lands. Such an encounter was possible due to the social and economic vicissitudes that resulted from the rise of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism, provoking a rupture of the manorial hacienda system into different kinds of units for agricultural production, some rooted in the manorial tradition, others grasping toward a liberal future. Connected to local or international markets, the novel haciendas in the basin of the Amaime River were subject to constant changes aimed at improving productivity under the close eye of their owners. In various scales and scopes, these agricultural units appropriated and transformed the Valley's environment.

Generational transitions were decisive conjunctures in the long-term evolution of manorial haciendas, as in the cases of La Concepción and La Torre. On the individual

decisions of heirs, informed by their historical context, rested the fate of these haciendas and of their land tenure dynamics in a context of busy real estate transactions. By choosing to inhabit the land and focusing their economy on agricultural activities, these generations of hacendados preserved their monopoly in exchange for developing a closer relationship with the Valley's natural environment. However, this lifestyle shift did not imply a change of land uses, insofar as livestock remained the core activity across the region. The new generation even reinforced it through investment in cultivated pastures. By increasing the price of land, guinea and par  grasses not only enhanced ranching activity, but also fostered environmental changes through their expansion into native forests. As in other parts of Colombia, African grasses set the pace of agricultural expansion into native ecosystems, despite territorial demands from landless peasants.<sup>3</sup>

A key factor in the transformation of this agrarian structure was the marked demographic growth and social diversification experienced in the Valley throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Free slave descendants and mestizo peasants settled in the Valley, attracted to its privileged environment, but especially seeking land, either to buy on a small scale from fragmented haciendas, or to colonize informally at crossroads, mountain slopes and wetlands. Particularly concentrated in the canton of Palmira, this squatter phenomenon developed through various forms of social organization and agricultural production, which exerted a constant pressure on landed estates. But it also supplied haciendas with cheap labor. The most common form of interaction between hacendados and landless peasants was through tenancy. In these contracts a landlord allowed a family to settle and farm domestic crops on a small fragment of his estate in exchange for an annual lease, their work for the hacienda, and the improvement of the piece of land, often from initially poor condition. Conflicts over lands

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<sup>3</sup> Shawn Van Ausdal, "Pasture, Profit, and Power: An Environmental History of Cattle Ranching in Colombia, 1850–1950," *Geoforum* 40, no. 5 (2009): 712.

were not common in the region, according to Alamrio, due to the large areas of empty lands, forests and wetlands.<sup>4</sup> However, during wartime, social conflicts stemming from the unequal distribution of land emerged in those areas abandoned by hacendados or exclusively relegated to extensive livestock grazing, such as the southern parts of the Valley's flatlands.

Another unit of agricultural production that emerged from this process was the liberal hacienda directly linked to an export economy. Representing the irruption of a modern mentality in an old agrarian structure, the liberal hacienda of Santiago Eder performed a pioneering role that sought to transform the Cauca River Valley's landscape over time. This farming system worked through a persistent commodification of land and nature, in constant adaptation to social, political, economic and environmental forces, and yet remained more engaged with outside circumstances than with local problems. Its survival was not necessarily dependent on its own yields; the liberal hacienda was partially financed by non-agricultural revenues, which allowed experimentation with crops and technologies without major risks. By adapting to the markets' changes, its production could move through varied commodities for export, while maintaining an internal supply of local products, such as meat and sugar. This adaptable character allowed La Manuelita to focus on sugarcane production even when the exports decayed in the country. The industrialization of Eder's sugar mill set a precedent for the later monoculture expansion in the region and for the energy transition that it inaugurated.

As the last node in a commercial circuit between Palmira, Buenaventura, Panama, New York and London, the liberal hacienda depended on proper transport connections. The isolated geographic location, despite and rich natural conditions of the Cauca River Valley, imposed a natural limit that restricted economic growth (Figure 2.2). In Eder's story, as in

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<sup>4</sup> Almario García, *La Configuración Moderna Del Valle Del Cauca, Colombia, 1850, 1940*, 145.

foreign travelers' tales, the Dagua road that connected Buenaventura and Cali was an obstinate obstacle to the "progress" of the liberal economy in the Valley (Figure 3.7). The rugged passage over the Western Andes Mountains and through the dangerous rapids of the Dagua River were not the only challenge. The humid climatic conditions in the port of Buenaventura also impeded the proper operation of business offices. In Holton's pejorative words: "The most formidable physical difficulty is in the unhealthy nature of the Pacific coast. It is a net-work of muddy creeks and islands, as bad, perhaps, as the west coast of Africa."<sup>5</sup>

From the liberal perspective, the nature between the Valley and the coast was an obstacle to overcome, for which the plan of a Pacific railroad was conceived as early as the 1870s. Eder was an active participant in conversations and plans for such a route.<sup>6</sup> These plans became real when the railroad reached Cali in 1910 and Palmira in 1915, from where it continued to extend northward, through the lands of hacienda La Manuelita. Beginning and ending of this story, the image of Eder's steam machinery being dragged across the jungles and mountains of Dagua (Figure 3.12) became a symbol of human triumph over nature, which was finally vanquished when the first train followed the same path. It was also a symbol of the socio-ecological transition in the Cauca River Valley's agricultural landscape, and with it, the environmental impacts that today sharpen the Inequality gap and threaten the sustainability of agriculture in these fertile lands.

Land use changes and continuities in the Cauca River Valley in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were directly influenced by historical land tenure dynamics, which rested upon the confluence of varied social groups attracted by the fertile lands. Although livestock remained as the core land use throughout the period, the gradual undermining of traditional

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<sup>5</sup> Holton, *New Granada: Twenty Months in the Andes*, 539.

<sup>6</sup> Eder, *El Fundador Santiago M. Eder*, 411.

haciendas and the increasing access of diverse actors to properties in the flatlands inspired the spread of diverse farming activities. On one hand, freed slave communities and settlers from other regions sought after the cultivation of consumption and small cash crops as means of sustenance for hamlets and local economies. Either as tenants, small land owners, or squatters peasant farming systems, according to notarial records, included maize, plantain, yucca and fruits for consumption, and tobacco, cocoa and small cattle for trade. On the other hand, agricultural entrepreneurs such as Santiago Eder maintained a constant trial, often failure, of farmed commodities in relation to external market demands. Coffee, indigo and tobacco occupied Eder's liberal hacienda business tests, while sugarcane and cattle endured as his solid productive ground. The diversification of landowners prompted a limited but significant diversification of land uses in the Valley's flatlands, even if cattle ranching remained as the dominant market.

Land ownership changes in the Cauca River Valley made possible new ways to appropriate nature, which was only possible thanks to the physical fragmentation of manorial haciendas, and the inclusion of varied actors into the local land market. In the process, new economies and farming systems appeared in the Valley, and with them new possibilities to use its land resources. In addition to this spatial reconfiguration, the arrival of industrial technologies for production and transportation, and the confluence of private and public interests around an export-based economy, established the ground for the socio-ecological transition in this agricultural landscape. First step of the metabolic process, the appropriation of land was determined by the social inequalities of a society with strong social continuities from the colonial period. Such appropriation eventually led to a land use that privileged monoculture for external markets over diversification for local livelihoods, and in consequence, to a drastic environmental transformation that compromises the sustainability of the Valley's agriculture.

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